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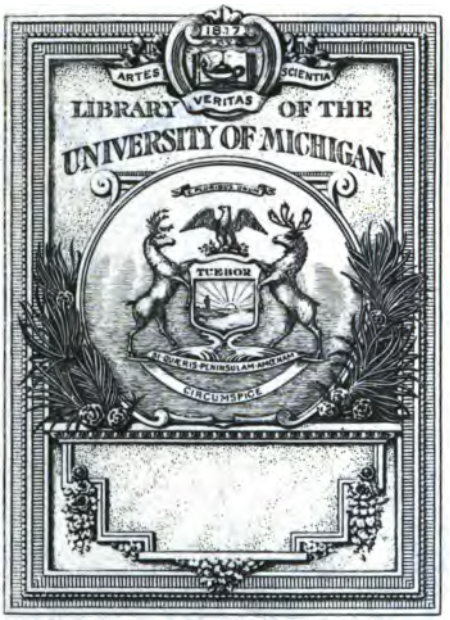

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WHAT WE WANT AND WHY

by

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WHAT WE WANT AND WHY

By the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas, M.P.

I think I can honestly say that the primary thing we want is a thoroughly efficient railway service. Everything would follow in the wake of that, and nothing of all the other things we want will be achieved without it.

There is nothing that does not depend upon transport facilities. Whether it be pleasure we consider, or the bare cost of living, or trade competition with other countries, the best possible facilities in transport play a fundamental rôle.

There are many ways, as I shall show presently, wherein vast improvements can and must be attained, but before touching on the mechanical side, I want to place first in the things we want in order to reach to full efficiency, the blessed word 'peace.' We want peace in the railway world. Not peace at any price. It is because we would not have

peace at any price that there has been what strife we have experienced. Peace with justice —that ought to be possible. It is possible. I am optimistic enough to think that it is within reach if not exactly within sight. If you come to think about it you can never get peace without justice. A peace that is forced against any one's interests, whatever side has to make the necessary sacrifice, must, in the end, create dissatisfaction and unrest. And peace and unrest cannot live in the same house. Compromise is good only in as far as it allows breathing space to make a just and permanent arrangement.

It is not true that the men or their leaders desire strikes. They realise even more readily than the public who use the railways that strikes are terrible disasters.

It is a little irritating to hear and read—particularly read—the wiseacres who estimate the costs of strikes and point out that this side or the other are looking for more in cash than even if they win they could get back in umpteen years. Surely that ought to prove that both sides are not fighting on a purely cash basis always. For our part I can easily maintain

that wages have always been only a part of principle in any struggle in which we have partaken. And as old Euclid said, the whole is always greater than the part. The irony of this surface observation of a portion of the Press is that it is a truth that no one can deny. But the thing goes deeper invariably.

Take an instance, quite a hypothetical one, but typical of most. We may say that a certain section of our workers ought to have a bigger wage. That is not a mere money matter, though it may seem to be. It is a principle in equity, and economics—because though a certain section of our critics may laugh at my claim, it is a fact that those who lead the Labour movement are not strangers to the science of economics, and understand the claims and the necessity of finance. What lies behind our fight is the principle of seeing that capital does not swamp labour and that labour has a definite charge on industry, whereas the policy has for too long a time been for capital to take all it can get—all it can get including the lowest it can persuade the labourer to take and still carry on.

What we want, then, is a recognition on the

part of capital that it can achieve nothing without labour, that labour always has been, and must always be, an equal partner.

But the Press too often do not deal in principles. They deal in causes and with the fewest possible exceptions they cloud the bigger issues by the endless 'facts' directed only at the superficial case. If further proof be necessary consider the number of occasions when workmen have gone on strike to support other workmen. It must be obvious that these get nothing financially out of such action. They lose. They are not fighting on the question of £ s. d.; they are fighting for a principle. Even if their friends win, they lose. Isn't that good enough to prove that it is not a selfish action, a sort of dipping their hands into the pockets of the other fellow and taking all he has?

Principles are what we are out for even though good wages—a fair share in the proceeds of labour—are part of our principles. And in this connection it is a good thing that the miners, owing to their last struggle, have established for themselves the great justice that labour should be the first charge on

industry. You cannot argue that a piece of machinery ought to be sold at half-price because your profits are only so-and-so. You must not argue that a worker should be paid a certain—not a fair living—wage because profits are low. There is no margin when you are dealing with minimum wages ; there usually is when you are considering employers' profits. If there are no profits and no likelihood of profits then you don't buy new machinery. But the price of the machinery must remain the same. So must the price of labour.

What we want in this connection is that the principle the miners won should be adapted to all industries—labour to be a first charge.

Yes ! Labour does not want strikes, but in the past we have been forced into them because, I think all will agree now, employers of the old school looked upon workmen as mere marketable commodities, as slaves indeed, who ought to go to them, cap in hand, even to ask the merest justice. All the strikes of the past decade have been born of the tyranny of the dead days when that spirit held sway. It was the swing of the pendulum, and I maintain it stands to the everlasting credit of the great

trade unions that on many occasions they held their hands from the powerful weapon of the strike when some big question of principle was in dispute. Looking back upon the history of industrial relationships between master and men, with all its records of indifference to the latter's interest, the high-handed attitude that ignored him as a human being with claims to any sort of comfort and happiness, there would, I think, have been some excuse if, when he had established and proved his power, he had run a little amok, and in his turn adopted the tyrannical methods that his master had evidenced before him.

The trade union movement shows no such lack of reason and balance. We have fought only for a just and logical place in the scheme of things, that place which the worker's importance in industry warrants, and I repeat with all earnestness that we desire peace as ardently as any one else.

It is for that very reason that we of the railways desire changes. We are not satisfied with the service as it is. It is wasteful, extravagant, and though unquestionably it is the safest in the world, we yet require further

measure of security for both the passengers and the workers. We want a nationalised system because we still believe that it can be made the most efficient of any. It would be the cheapest of any, cheapest, I mean, to the users of the lines.

Think of the enormous sums that could be saved by wiping out all the duplication of management that has been going on for so long. It is true that the end of government control gave us a system of grouping that goes some way to remove this wastage. Instead of fifty-two railway companies there are now seven, and it is to be supposed that overhead charges will be reduced to a certain degree. *But if it is good to group the railway systems into seven groups, it must be all the better to group them into one.*

The outstanding argument in favour of private enterprise—the fillip of competition, which is supposed to give better service to the community—has gone, because one of the declared objects of the railways to-day is to drop 'wasteful' competition, and also incidentally to close down stations that do not pay. There you have the keynote of the whole difference. The

private railway is, of course, out for profit first. A national railway would be out for service first. A private company has to think of its shareholders ; of course it has. It is business, and directors who do not show profits know what to expect when the time of their annual meeting comes round.

I have said something in the foregoing about labour and capital and the relations that should exist between them. But when we come to the railways we maintain that capital should not come into operation. We must all admit the use capital has been in building up every system of railways, but the proportion of its service to our country is only the extent of the failure of our past governments. It measures their lack of public service, their lost opportunities, their breakdown in working for the public weal.

For it ought never to have been left to private enterprise to become possessed of the huge amount of our land and lay down railways. The State ought to have done it in the first instance. Even a little country like Japan—and in those days it was comparatively unimportant and certainly poor—had the vision

at the outset to plan its own railways. It laid down the first line the country ever had, and it would have gone on with the work had its treasury been able to face the cost. It couldn't, as it happened, and had to call in the aid of private capital. But nevertheless, the government, in granting rights to construct railways in the country, always laid down a time limit for ownership and insisted on the ultimate right to purchase at a fixed value. The result was that in 1906 the whole of the lines passed into the hands of the government, and it is interesting to read what the authorities then considered the benefits that would accrue from the transfer :—

These are the terms :—

1. Systematic operation of trains, through train service, freight and passenger rates based on a unified tariff, and simplified traffic arrangements will combine to promote the efficiency of the service and consequently bring about the increase of net revenue.

2. The unification of rates on through traffic will result in the reduction of rates.

3. The standardisation of permanent way and equipment appliances will permit the

communal use of materials among the various lines, on the one hand, and, on the other, will promote the development of the industry for the supply of railway materials.

4. The consolidation will introduce immediate economies estimated at 1,819,000 yen a year in consequence of the reduction of salaries paid to the higher officials and the general and account office staff, by the elimination of all expenditure required in the handling of joint traffic business, and further, as a result of eliminating the duplication of provisions and plants, and the reduction of approximately fifty per cent. of the stores kept in stock, and lastly, by the unrestricted flow of vehicles throughout the system.

I would like to draw the attention of those who think our case is merely a political stunt to these facts, and if they think that this is mere argument, I have in my possession figures as to the result of the working since that time. The cost of running has been enormously reduced and expenses—under the private system amounting to over eight per cent. of the total—have come down to 2·6. Practically every estimate has been more than realised,

and the service has been improved all round.

That latter fact is important. A country can extend, whereas a private company will not. The latter first wants to see a result—naturally. It follows where a demand has been created, whereas, even in many parts of England, and certainly in Scotland, we need the railways to take the initiative.

Such a thing as a railway should not pay profits to private people. 'Is such a thing necessary?' 'Does it meet a legitimate demand?' These should be the tests, and not 'Will it pay?' In the same way a railway director should be chosen, not for the name he bears and the position he occupies in society, but because of his railway capability and experience.

If our railways were publicly owned you could, at one sweep, cut down costs so enormously that cheap fares and far cheaper freights would immediately come into operation. Let us glance at only one item—that of the private ownership of wagons. That, of course, would be abolished. They would all belong to the State. They would therefore

be able to be used anywhere and at any time. To-day it is an amazing fact that half the wagons running on our railways are private property—the actual numbers show 734,000 owned by the companies, and 628,000 privately owned. See what this means. Messrs. A. despatch coal from the Black Country to Brighton in their own wagon; that vehicle has to be returned to them empty. It cannot be used on its return journey. It is unbelievable, but true, that because of this 30,000,000 miles are run empty every year. How much of the 13½ million tons of coal used during each year go up in smoke on this useless task! And how much time also are these trucks not in use, but standing empty in private or other railway sidings! There are, roughly, 15,000 miles of goods sidings in the country. Get a truck somewhere in this maze and think of the trouble of getting it out and to its right destination. No wonder ninety-four per cent. of its time is occupied in standing still.

This is one of the reasons why we want nationalisation. Another is because it would inevitably bring about standardisation. One

could enlarge upon that aspect almost without end. But the advantages must be obvious to any who think for a moment, that spare parts for engines and rolling stock will of course only fit one make. If they were all interchangeable, half the cost of repairs would fade away and stores could be reduced in the same degree. To-day every company not only has to keep stocks of its own parts, but also a certain quantity of other railways'. The whole system is chaotic and it is absurd to think this is the best we can do for the community. The companies do not even build their own trucks always. It is again the result of private enterprise, which means more profits have to be taken out of the business and the only result of that, of course, is higher freight charges than are necessary. Millions of pounds could be saved every year if all were done by one authority, and that authority the public.

Another example is provided by the locomotives. It is an important item when it is pointed out that the value of these is all told about £200,000,000. That is what it cost to build what we have. To replace them would be twice as much. Maintenance and renewals

would account for another twenty millions a year. These figures want watching. It is easy to see that where such vast fortunes are in question a saving of a small percentage amounts to something.

Very well. A quarter of the whole is always under repair or awaiting repair. Looking at the repair side first; why have we not yet a standard engine, all the parts of which would be interchangeable? Even while we are waiting for state ownership, could not the companies—in their own interests—come to some arrangement to attain this end? It is only to be expected that if left to their own devices, each railway engineer will have and use fads of his own. They may be good fads, economical. Then let them be adopted. Let the best possible engine be built, utilising what is best in all designs. Why, to-day even each railway hasn't its own standard. Do you know that there are thirty-three types of engines on the North-Western alone? It must be wasteful. How can parts be made on the principle of mass production while you have such a lot of different types? We want this change because it is going to release all the enormous amount

of capital to reduce cost of running. There would be very few engines waiting for repair if engines were standardised.

Add to this the fact that thirty million miles are run every year to convey empty carriages and trucks from their destinations to their home stations, and then think how extravagant is the cost of the engines of our railways.

It is the same all along the line. A little thing like axle-boxes about which the outsider has probably never thought. He ought not to have to think about them. It ought to be obvious that they would be all the same and built as cheaply as possible. There are two hundred different types, as a matter of fact. Two hundred ! To begin with, every company had adopted a different axle box and a different brake.

The result is that a brake on one truck cannot be used when the truck gets—as it often does—on to another system. What does that matter ? Let the truck be fitted to a dual brake to operate on both. This looks like the last word in endless expense.

There is another point that should be made here. Why is not the rolling stock built by the

railways themselves? It isn't. A good deal is built by outside firms who themselves, of course, have to make a profit out of the work. They have to show their own dividends. Leaving out the obvious point that if the State owned the whole business this extra profit would not have to be paid, why do the companies pay it out to others, whereas, if they built themselves, that surplus would, so to speak, go back into the business. In the event of state ownership that profit would go towards reduction of fares and freight.

There are fifty thousand new wagons constructed every year, and five hundred locomotives. What would central and unified production save in the course of a few years?

You might say why should we, the workers, worry about economies and efficiency. First, because we are part of the State and desire, as every other citizen should desire, to reach on towards perfection. But there is more than that in our minds. We quite naturally want a decent living wage for every worker, and because we desire that and are prepared to fight for it, it is up to us to show it can be done. The present excessive waste that is everywhere

evident on the railway workings of the country is particularly riling when at the same time we seek to improve the workers' standard of living. By eliminating even part of the waste by means of State ownership and standardised engines and rolling stock and destroying the system of privately owned trucks, we could see a possibility not only of improving the general conditions of the worker but further of reducing freights and travelling charges. That is why we want nationalisation.

But let us turn to more everyday things of the moment which we want before nationalisation comes (as one day it must come).

The eight-hours' day was fought for, not so that men might work longer hours and be paid overtime, the most costly of all labour, but because we know a man is more fitted after not more than an eight-hours' day to give his best on the next day and the next. I have known, years ago, when men worked twelve and fourteen hours day after day, they would turn up for work jaded and ill. From a point of view of business alone it was a bad investment on the part of the owners, but more than that the health of the workers was our consideration.

I wonder how many accidents in those old days could have been traced to the poor condition of some worker. A man could almost fall asleep at his post when he had worn himself out with long days of toil. The eight-hour day was, of course, a great triumph for justice and efficiency. The point people often miss when they talk about the shorter working day is that how much you can get out of eight hours is far more important than the length of the day worked. That is why railwaymen want overtime as far as possible eliminated altogether. Eight hours is enough, and it is bad economy to work overtime, especially when men are out of employment.

Another thing that is exercising our minds at the present time is the question of safety both for the travelling public and the employee. As I have said, as far as passengers are concerned, railway travelling in this country is the safest in the world. Take the most recent figures I have seen. They show that only one passenger out of 199,000,000 carried is killed. At the same time in the railway service the figures show one in every nineteen employed killed or injured. Not for one moment do I

suggest that there has not been tremendous improvement. There has. Incidentally this proves what efforts the union has made, for it is a fact that every Act of Parliament dealing with safety appliances on the railways was forced through by an agitation of the men; and after the passing of each act the figures have always shown fewer and fewer accidents.

The next step to be attained is automatic train control. We are investigating the possibilities of this matter now. Experience has proved that under the best of precautions the human element sometimes fails, but I believe, judging from our experience, that it will be possible to procure a device that will very nearly render it impossible under any circumstances for a serious railway accident to occur. Of course, this will involve cost—and it has always been this matter of cost that has barred the way in the past to further improvements. But the point we have to ask ourselves is whether any money can compensate for the loss of human life. Therefore, we say we want every device that will render less the daily risk of danger to the railway worker and the

railway traveller, and the cost must not ultimately stand in the way.

What we want also is to recognise that, no matter what grade a man may be, he is entitled to a living wage. That the same wage for each grade can be obtained is absurd. It is not even desirable. It would kill the incentive to progress and the effort to reach higher rank. But that every grade is entitled to a decent living wage, who can doubt it? There will not be peace, and can never be peace, until that is clearly and definitely established.

But there is something else we want, the importance of which is often overlooked. There are more strikes and upheavals in the railway world caused by minor grievances that the men call, and understand as, petty officialism, than from any other reason. Some small thing left to foster and fester, and whisperings go round the shops and the yards until they attain an importance which is false and which they should never have acquired, and eventually break out into industrial strife. Then to the public it seems probably not a sufficient reason for a strike. But the public have not seen the various stages through which the thing grew

to fruition. They do not know the official aloofness to the conditions, the sometimes autocratic manner in which simple requests are ignored and treated with contumely. So we want machinery that will enable a man who feels he has a legitimate grievance to have it immediately examined, impartially and honestly, and if proved to be warranted, to have it removed.

It is wise always to back a statement with an example. Take, then, in this connection, some accident that has occurred. It may be a small or a big thing, and of course—whatever one may do in the way of safety appliances such as automatic signalling control—we shall, because of the human element, get accidents of sorts. It is inevitable in the railway life, and I maintain it redounds to the credit of the general railway workers that there are so few to-day. Compare them with the accidents that occur on our streets every year, and you will see how much can be laid to the credit and the care of the worker.

But they do occur, alas! I suppose they always will to an extent. That does not deter us from striving in the yards as well as in

Parliament to eliminate them as far as possible, but we have to recognise that they do occur, and cannot always be avoided. Might as well hope to control the climate as to clear the casualty list entirely.

But when an accident happens we claim that it is unfair to condemn a man before he has been heard. We want a court to which he may appeal, before which he can frankly state his version of the affair. Formerly he was punished often unheard. It is not British. Even a 'Drunk and Disorderly' has his chance to speak. But if a man is considered responsible for some minor, perhaps trivial occurrence, he is punished. Think, then, of the difficulty of removing the grievance he is left with, supposing he has a legitimate excuse to advance! He not only broods over it himself, but between his colleagues, probably enlists their sympathies—and you have a first-class dispute, savouring of mutiny, well in the making. And all so unnecessary.

We want, therefore, that in every station, shed, and shop there shall be free opportunities for the officials of the company and the men to meet and talk frankly of such grievances as

may crop up. It would be as much for the benefit of one side as for the other. If such a policy had only been adopted in the past it would have stopped numberless conflicts and smoothed over endless trying difficulties. When once one side has taken up a certain position and the other side has taken an opposite stand, see how unlikely it is that either will readily give way. Their dignity is encroached upon: they must back up their own side. The real merits of a case are so often lost in the battledore and shuttlecock of argument, each side seeking to score points and not to end the dispute.

Let us have some machinery for preventing these things at the start. It can easily be set up, and not only will it nip troubles in the bud, it will be the best of all possible factors in creating confidence in one another.

This is all part of a new feeling that is coming into the railway world. We want it to be developed.

Though we are not yet to get the whole we want, we are at least coming into the post-control era with a new spirit. We are not going back to pre-war conditions. Even the

railway companies themselves have never raised a voice in favour of that. It would have been scandalous if we had gone back.

There was no more extravagant railway service in the world than ours was under the old conditions. It cost Britain more to move a ton of goods by rail than any other country. That is a staggering fact having its influence on business everywhere. All over the Continent, France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, there were railways owned by the states themselves, giving all sorts of concessions to business firms which placed them in an advantageous position. But in Britain it almost seemed as though our railways were anxious to put the screw upon businesses all they would stand. There was no reason for the old freight charges. You may point to the fact that railway stock has never shown a very high return. I know it hasn't. But that was no excuse for keeping up prices. On the contrary. Look what the present high prices have done to certain local traffic to-day. People can go as cheaply by road as they are going by rail. The railways are awake to it now, but hundreds and thousands of pounds

have had to be invested in road services in order to bring about the awakening.

No, high fares were not the solution of showing profits; amalgamation, the cutting out of the superfluous wastage, was the only real road to economic soundness. The country ought to have insisted on it when, at the end of the war agreements, the moment of opportunity arrived. We shall never have a better chance to take over the lines. And that we didn't means that for more years business must be handicapped by higher charges than are necessary, because so much effort and money is thrown away by the duplications of the present system.

Still, while we say quite frankly what it is, we want to give the reasons why we are fully ready to admit things are likely to be better than they were. We have gained something. We have driven the flock into seven pens, and we hope for economies in working and cheaper fares as a result. These will probably not come to any appreciable extent until next year, but they will come.

Meanwhile, things are better because new principles have been won. It has been

admitted that the workers should have a share in the management of the railways. That the conditions suggested were not acceptable is one point, but that the policy is approved is another—and better—point. Some people were surprised that we did not accept what was offered in this direction. That offer was that a few men should be put upon Boards of Directors. Why did we not accept? The answer is simple. It would not have been a workable scheme. It was not the scheme we wanted. What good could this small minority have done? What weight would they have had? Practically none, for we have to remember that the companies were clearly and definitely hostile to their presence there.

No machinery can have the slightest value, or the slightest hope of achieving success, unless it is operated by good-will on the part of both interests.

In most businesses I claim the two chief investors are the producer (the worker) and the consumer. In the case of the railways, there is a third interest—the traveller. Since we do not have the railways entirely in the hands of these three interests—which means

the public—and since there has to be that unnecessary fourth share, the capitalist, who invests in railway stock but does nothing else towards the success of the lines—then the least that we can claim is that the other interests should have an equal voice in the running of the system.

In detailing what we want in this matter of management, I would first remind the reader that the success of the railways, more than most businesses, depends upon individual effort. You must have the good-will of the worker and never was he more ready to give it than at the present time. Though the ultimate goal is not within sight, he realises that the time is ripe for a coming together in council for the general good of the undertaking. But he naturally expects his sympathies to be reciprocated. This is, of course, essential, and I, for one, have every hope that they will be. We want the position of two opposing parties to disappear and in their place we want a team all playing for the same end—efficiency. The railwayman does take a pride in what he does. He really does want our lines to be the best in the world, and one day when the

alarming waste which so discourages him has been obliterated, we shall be able to lead the world. I have that much faith in the British worker.

But what I want to emphasise is that this can never be brought about from headquarters alone, but by every worker down to the lowest of them all. There is one absolutely unanswerable proof of this. Let the workers agree to work for one week 'according to rule' and see the result. It would stop the service, practically. I should personally never favour such action. It is childish. I would sooner fight square for any principle that could not be settled in a council room. I mention it now, not as a weapon, but as an illustration of the need for every man not just to carry out the letter of the rules, but to go further and do his best to make the service good. He does do this. It is up to him to make the service a success. He could mar it if he chose to do, not his most, but his least. He can speed up deliveries or aggravate delays, and the 'rules' would always cover him if he adopted the slow method. He has miles of red tape ready to hand if he chose to use it to tie round the truck wheels.

Thus it is wise to encourage and not be antagonistic to the worker. There are many ways, none in which he is not considered. We find still that one grade is played up against another grade. Until quite recently, for instance, there was this anomaly. The man at one end of the train was working on a guaranteed week, whereas the man at the other end was not. The result was that the one was considered not quick enough, and the other was looked upon as a nigger-driver. That, happily, is a thing of the past now, but these are the sorts of things that have caused friction in the past and which can so easily be remedied.

But there remains one anomaly still which is the cause of much discontent to-day. I doubt if there be any cause more productive of discontent in the whole service. It is the fact that there are thousands of men with no machinery whatever for adjusting any grievance that may—and must—arise. It comes to this, that they are not treated as railwaymen at all. These are the railway shopmen. There are thousands of them, and when any matter comes up for consideration they are left outside with no one officially to speak for them, no one is

authorised to put their case, and it is inevitable that they suffer from this lack.

It has to be admitted that the fault of this is, to a large extent, the fault of the Unions themselves. There are, unfortunately, jealousies among the Unions, and one of the things we must ourselves seek to do in the near future is to put our own house in order and learn that unity is a part of unionism. But that these men should be outside negotiations is only a proof that, apart altogether from the Trades Union movement, there should be far closer relations between master and man, that machinery should be established which would automatically guarantee a pathway of approach for the lowest to the consideration of the employers. And we on our side, in the meantime, must strive to remove the jealousies that exist between grade and grade. We must on our part become a united body of workers, generous in our desires to serve and attain full efficiency—a united whole, not banded together for aggression, but for service—then we may claim fairly and frankly the full consideration of our claims, and demand a square deal on behalf of the whole of us or any part of us.

Let me add one word upon this point: when our own organisations are really *en rapport*—working in a real and effective unison like an army where discipline is understood, and pride of regiment is the only rivalry—and when, too, the employers have realised that we are out, not for trouble, but for improvement and attainment, then if they on their part are willing to give us a fair deal, I assert with no fear of contradiction that the men will never make demands that will be unreasonable.

Since I am writing of what we want, I put as an integral part of the argument that peace is our first requisite. The assertion is that, given fair play, we shall never expect the peace by asking for the impossible. We don't expect it. We don't mean to strain relations by fighting for it. All we want is justice, and that justice, I venture to think, is the award—and no more—that would be granted us by an average jury of common-sense, unbiased men who, with no interest to serve, free from all partisanship, were asked to consider our case and award a verdict.

For the extremist is a little fellow who,

though he may make a lot of noise in a corner, has no weight. He exists, of course, but his voice carries farther than his influence. The Press, who may not be sympathetic to a cause, are the wires along which his voice goes. He is, of course, not a representative of any one but himself; but a Press seeking to pick holes in what may be a perfectly fair case are only too eager to take some exaggerated statement of an irresponsible man, and say in effect, 'See what rot these railwaymen talk!' Then, to be sure, the man who has thus been given a spurious publicity considers himself to be an important personage and goes from exaggeration to exaggeration, until, with careful handling by the other side, one entire cause may be prejudiced and made to look ridiculous.

I don't criticise the Press. They are counsel for a case and use what next comes to their hands to advance their own arguments. But I do say it is a pity that Labour hasn't a better Press. By that I mean a larger Press. They have their own avenues, I know, but only to their own public. They have practically no means of stating their case to the great

multitude of newspaper readers. It is, alas, too often the other side that they read!

What we would like is a greater impartiality on the part of the general Press in industrial affairs. The Press mix our concerns too much with politics, and perhaps we encourage that by ourselves seeking political ends by industrial arguments.

There is, of course, a big social programme to which all Labour subscribes—and one day I hope to see the Labour ideal being tested out by experience; but in the meantime I believe it wise to deal with the incidents of our work on industrial lines, and then quite fairly we can say we want these things considered on their merits, and assert that no ulterior motive lies behind. Let us make our political fight in the political world; but when industrial prices and principles are in question let us not use the occasion for political victories.

A great deal of misunderstanding in this direction would be avoided if the men were properly represented on the Boards of Management. A fair representation, not merely a concession for appearances sake—that is why we were unable to accept the offer that was

made to us. We do not want a shadow, but a substantial representation; we do not want strength to fight: we want strength so that we may assist.

It is all wrong to think that workmen on the Boards of Management would irritate, or would seek to irritate. On the contrary, while advancing the workers' cause, they would play for conciliation, which means they would invariably strive, not to push forward, but to retard the culmination of a strike.

I regard this as one of the most important things we want.

The worker on a Board of Management would soften things down in two ways. He would be able to see the management's point of view as he never does now, and he would be able to put the workers' point of view as the employers never see it now. I realise that very often the employer cannot tell the workman the why and wherefore of all he does. There are figures, for instance, that it is unwise to disclose; there are schemes set down for the future that it would be folly to divulge. But should the workman be expected to assume these things whenever a

point is asked and answered? It isn't human nature.

Had he, however, his own representatives on the Board he would trust them. If they came to him and said, 'That's all right; it is straight. The reason for it is good, take it from us.' Even though the facts and figures remain secret, the worker would understand—understand that his interests were not being ridden over roughshod, but were in safe keeping.

It is, to my mind, unquestionably in the interests of both parties that the men should be fully represented on the Boards of Management. It spells peace.

I have here dealt with no impossible ideals. I have deliberately steered clear of any temptation to picture a Utopia where everything is perfection. There is nothing in this programme very complex, certainly nothing outside the range of practicability. For the moment it would seem the opportunity to obtain a national railway system is to be passed by. But even that is not outside practical politics. It can be done; it will be done, and I predict that half a dozen years after it has

been in operation the outstanding feature of the business will be one of intense wonder that it was not done years before.

Success will silence the critics, and every experiment that has been made gives us confidence that success must attend its adoption in England.

But for the moment let us put that on one side, thinking of the other things I have enumerated here that we want. The greatest hope of all is that there is unquestionably a new spirit abroad in the service. It can be seen on both sides, but speaking for my own end, I assert without fear of contradiction, that never in the whole history of the Trade Union movement have railwaymen been so anxious to settle down. They realise that strikes and strife do not benefit them. I do not mean by that that they will—or ever—abandon their claim for a square deal. They will fight as hard as need be for these things which, to my mind, are mere elementary justice, but I have a hope that we have passed the era of strikes. They have been necessary to bring us as far along the road as we have come. But now we have arrived—I hope—

at a new period in which, instead of hitting each other to obtain a verdict, we shall arrange our differences and arrive at fair accommodation in the council chamber.

Our aspirations are not mere selfishness; we understand the economics of the situation enough to make only those demands that are reasonable and just, and I believe the employers are becoming awake to that fact. Let this spirit continue and we shall arrive at peace. And peace in industry means prosperity.

Above everything else we want confidence in each other. That is the only road to contentment and happiness.

WHAT LABOUR WANTS

By Robert Williams

Secretary National Transport Workers' Federation

The wants of organised labour, just like the wants of the ordinary individual, differ from time to time and from place to place.

Any reply can be obtained to the foregoing question by going to those whose attitudes and proclivities will determine such reply.

For instance, the representatives of the brewing trade would say that Labour wants more and better facilities for obtaining drink; members of the Coalition, still living in the atmosphere of the war and the armistice, tell us that the British worker still demands the head of the Kaiser and that Germany should pay for the cost of the war.

An incident occurred in 1917—when the engineering workers in the Clyde area were particularly restive—which affords some enlightenment regarding the wants of a worker who was obviously a revolutionary socialist.

A deputation was appointed from the workshop to wait upon a typical Glasgow employer, and after a few preliminaries the employer said bluntly to the spokesman for the deputation : 'Tell me exactly, So-and-So, what it is you really want.' The leader of the deputation replied by saying : 'As a matter of fact what we want is the workshop for the workers: that the land and industrial capital which is socially necessary shall be socially owned by the entire community.'

At the present moment, when the industrial prospect is none too bright, we may naturally expect that the worker's desire has outwardly varied from what it was a year or two ago. The desire of the starving individual is properly and naturally a desire for food. The preoccupation of all of us when we are ill is the urgent desire for bodily health ; and speaking with some knowledge of the outlook of the workers, especially those organised in the National Transport Workers' Federation, one can safely say that what the workers clamour for at the present moment is the maintenance of existing wages and the stabilisation of working conditions. They want, moreover, some

economic security which will prevent them from being pushed inexorably into the ranks of the under-employed and the unemployed. Other would-be workers, at the present moment to the extent of a round two millions, who, through causes over which they have no control, have been deprived of the right of selling their labour power, naturally want work at proper maintenance rates or, as an alternative, a reasonable standard of living in the shape of maintenance grants.

It may be imagined by some, particularly by those whose minds are of a superficial character, that Labour's revolutionary outlook has changed materially since the partial or complete failure of great and potential revolutionary stoppages like those in the shipbuilding and engineering trade of 1919, in the railway industry in October of the same year, and in the mining industry at the end of 1920 and again in the spring of 1921. Labour's militancy or hesitancy is determined by the prevailing economic and political circumstances —the will to strike or to revolt has waned directly as a result of the increase in the ranks of the unemployed. The underlying principles

upon which the Labour Movement has been built remain as true to-day as when they were first formulated. Labour's army is giving ground before the tremendous onslaughts of organised capital, but it is giving ground still as an army, with its moral forces in being, and not as a rabble.

There are many amongst the uninformed critics of the Labour Party and the Labour Movement as a whole who attribute the present orderly retreat to a betrayal on the part of those who have been thrust into a position of responsibility. This is either a wanton or misinformed interpretation of all the facts and circumstances.

During the railway dispute of 1919 the whole of organised labour supported the line taken by the National Union of Railwaymen, because it was felt at that period that if the organised workers had allowed the railwaymen's organisation to be crushed and humiliated, no section of work-people would be immune from the attacks of the organised master class. Again, in 1920, the whole of the political and industrial Labour Movement rallied to the programme and policy of the

Council of Action, because a further war on the side of Poland against Soviet Russia was brought clearly within the bounds of possibility. It may be pertinently asked, why was it, therefore, that the Labour Movement, which was whole-heartedly with the railwaymen in their general strike in 1919 and with the Council of Action in their threat of a general stoppage throughout the whole of industry in 1920, did not exhibit a greater measure of solidarity with the miners in their epic struggle in April and May, 1921? Mr Lloyd George, in a recent speech in the House of Commons in justification of the Treaty with the Irish Free Republic and replying to a criticism made by Mr Asquith said that what had become practical and expedient to-day was inexpedient and impracticable twelve or eighteen months previous, when the gun-men and the 'black-and-tans' were shooting each other in the guerilla warfare which was taking place in Ireland. Without seeking in any way to justify the earlier policy of the Prime Minister, one may safely say, that although attempting at all times to maintain certain clear and well-defined principles, for which the Labour

Movement stands, it is not always possible, nor expedient, to fight for those principles on every conceivable occasion. Those who direct the Labour Movement are compelled by stern, inexorable facts and events to shape their policy according to a cold and perhaps sordid realism.

It can scarcely be denied, even by Mr Lloyd George's friends, that any effort to renew the Irish War on a greatly increased scale would have created a crisis in the Anglo-Saxon world which would have speedily driven the Coalition out of office. The Irish Republican Army had won the approval of their kinsfolk in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and America. The Government dared not have sent representatives to the Washington Conference if the Irish Truce had been suspended and we had proceeded to 'occupy' Ireland with 200,000 British soldiery. The Peace Treaty with the Irish Free State arose, therefore, not out of justice or equity but out of expediency.

Looking back on the efforts made by the Triple Industrial Alliance to support the Miners' Federation in their dispute, one can

realise the inevitability of certain developments, whilst regretting many things that transpired during that period. I have said with my colleagues of the Transport Workers' Federation on many occasions, that as far as it was humanly possible we had determined to throw in our weight with the miners in that titanic struggle. We attempted to visualise all the difficulties and were making progress in overcoming many of those difficulties. We understood fully that it would have been a suicidal policy for us to have adopted direct action without the co-operation of the men employed in the railway service. It was extremely difficult for us to line up half a million transport workers, together with half a million railwaymen behind the Miners' Federation in a dispute the settlement and determination of which would not directly affect them.

I have attempted elsewhere to show that the position in the transport world is not comparable with the position amongst the miners. The mining industry is homogeneous and the men usually live together in definite mining areas. By reason of the conditions under which they live and work, a mass psychology, which

exists to the same degree in no other industry, has been created. When a district stoppage takes place that stoppage is complete so far as that district is concerned, and it is complete throughout the whole industry when a national stoppage takes place. No attempt is made to import strike-breakers, because of the almost insuperable difficulties which would arise, either to the owners or, should the State take control, to the Government. With the miners there is no fear of the importation of blacklegs, or of the places of men being filled by amateur or professional strike-breakers. The modern community has become so resourceful in character that it was able to weather the storm of an eight weeks' stoppage in the coal industry during 1912 and a ten weeks' general stoppage in 1921 without any immediate serious results.

The foregoing facts, together with many others which space will not allow me to relate, have tended to make the Miners' Federation one of the most powerful and, at the same time, rigid organisations in the world. Amongst the miners' leaders one does not discover that flexibility, that adaptability, that capacity for

adjustment and compromise which has been created in the other organisations by the very nature of the work their members are engaged in and the conditions surrounding those organisations.

In comparison with the rigidity of the miners' organisation, we find the mentality of their leaders less disposed to what I would call the give and take of compromise than the leaders in the railway and transport organisations. Sometimes, however, I have been inclined to regret that there was not a little more rigidity displayed in the policy of the National Union of Railwaymen and the Transport Workers' Federation than was the case in the period preceding what is now called 'Black Friday.' We were made painfully aware during the Triple Alliance crisis, that when the Government was mobilising 'all the forces of the State,' those forces were intended to improvise the skeleton transport services which would take the place of the services usually in operation, that is to say by the employment of middle-class volunteers, 'white guards,' the military, and all who could be suborned in defence of the existing order, would be thrust

into the places left by rail and transport workers. Despite this fact, however, if it had been humanly possible to stiffen up the leaders of the transport and railway workers with some of that mental rigidity prevalent amongst the miners' leaders, and at the same time to render the outlook of the miners' leaders a little more flexible in the matter of the give and take of compromise, there is no doubt that had a conference taken place following upon the Prime Minister's invitation to the Miners' Federation, some settlement would have emerged which would have eased the fall-back in the miners' wages; which would have maintained to a higher degree the industrial solidarity of the whole working-class movement than is the case to-day.

With that wisdom which comes after the event we are able to look into the causes of the collapse of the Triple Alliance. As I have tried to show, the methods which the workers employed to give effect to their desires must vary according to the relative strength and weakness caused by harsh but inexorable economic and political factors. I am firmly of the opinion that had the Government chosen to

determine upon de-control of the mines and had forced the issue at any period in 1919 or 1920, there would have been a different result from the unfortunate occurrence of April, 1921. Ordinary intelligence will understand that the Government had carefully prepared its plans and selected the opportune time when it was most possible to thrust de-control upon the mining industry. In 1919 and for a period in 1920, unemployment was not so prevalent amongst transport workers as it had become in 1921.

The demoralisation which sets in as the result of unemployment had unnerved large sections of the entire working class movement, and, therefore, although the need for militancy remained as strong as ever, the workers were in a more acquiescent frame of mind because of the factors indicated.

Much of the foregoing is, admittedly, a digression from the subject matter of a chapter on 'What Labour Wants,' but certain indisputable facts must be quoted in order to demonstrate that whilst needs, wants, and desires may remain more or less constant, working-class measures and methods designed

to give effect to those must vary according to ever-changing opportunities.

For a brief period following upon the armistice, the aims of the working class might legitimately be said to be truly revolutionary. Let us consider for a moment a few of the outstanding features of the then-existing world situation. Labour in nearly every country had assumed political responsibility and some measure of political influence and power. The capitalist and land-owning factions in all the belligerent countries had made frantic appeals to Labour to give of its best, as it had never been called upon so to do before. Pledges and promises were made by the score, that in consequence of the brotherhood of the trenches, because of the willingness of Labour to lay its life on the altar of its country's cause, and because of the untold sacrifices on the part of the common people, Labour should never again be allowed to sink into its pre-war standard of squalor, poverty, and indignity. In 1917 Russia had effected first its political revolution and then its social revolution; Russia had instituted a dictatorship of workers and peasants. Just before the armistice—in 1918

—Germany had compelled the abdication of the reigning House of the Hohenzollerns. Mass demonstrations in the streets of Vienna had been the means of removing the Hapsburgs from the throne of Austria-Hungary. When the Armistice had been signed, our own soldiery displayed a marked unwillingness, amounting here and there to insubordination and insurrection, to return to the trenches, once they had tasted the approach to civil life by their 'leaves' to their homes and families. The Premier had convened a great National Conference of representatives of employers and employed, the object of which was, as he told us, to harmonise the conflicting interests of the employing and the employed classes, and to usher in the dawn of industrial peace by some great uplift in the lives and conditions of the workers. The brazen-faced and impudent Mr Churchill, speaking presumably on behalf of his Cabinet colleagues, had promised the nationalisation of the railways. This was deemed by many to be an earnest of the Government's good intentions to nationalise or socialise the great industries of the country. Unemployment had for some few years

practically ceased to exist and there had been work for every willing pair of hands, male or female, because of the pressure upon our available man-power. The Trade Union Movement had increased its numerical strength in this country by over three millions, and those whose lives hitherto had been lives of uncertainty and oft-times almost unendurable poverty, had been raised to something approaching human dignity, because of circumstances operating during the war.

To those of us who attempted to look a little more deeply, it appeared that war developments had brought us appreciably nearer the social revolution, in which men and women would be appraised not for whom they were, nor for what possessions they had, but for the services they rendered and were prepared to render to the community. An ordinarily intelligent survey of the facts revealed to us that with some six millions of the best and most virile of our manhood employed in bearing arms or in the preparation to bear arms, and with a further two millions of men and women engaged in supplying them with the munitions and material of war, we had

been able to carry on during the whole period of the war with no shortage more severe than that of a little less butter, an occasional shortage of potatoes, and with our meat supplies more or less severely rationed. We might have asked ourselves, in fact we did ask ourselves; if we were enabled to carry on in this manner with the efforts and energies of some eight millions of our population unproductively employed, in the economic sense, what limit could we place upon the standard of life which might be reasonably afforded, if and when the vast majority of those eight millions had their constructive energies and capacities directed into the proper channels? A nation's wealth and a nation's capacity to produce wealth can never be adequately expressed in mere money values. It is true that some £8,000,000,000 remain as a war indebtedness; it is true, moreover, that the future has been mortgaged to those who had invested their war accumulations in the war loans, but the fact remains that although America was and is our creditor to the extent of over a thousand millions, our allies have borrowed at least to the extent that we borrowed from the United States.

The cultivated soil of our country under pressure of events was made increasingly fertile; the acreage of land under the plough had more than doubled as a direct result of our pressing needs following upon the operations of the submarine menace. Better woollen khaki cloth was used for the backs of our soldiery, and they were shod with better footwear than had been the case when they were soldiers in the great industrial army before the war. Mechanical developments, especially in the engineering and metallurgical industries, had followed a course of unprecedented speeding-up. Limitations of man-power had brought about epoch-making changes in our productive capacity, and the workers fondly hoped and imagined that a beneficient governing-class would allow them to derive some measure of advantage from all this increased capacity for wealth production.

Soldiers and sailors, moreover, had it constantly suggested to them that the workers at home had been, and still were, earning fabulous wages, and they longed greatly to return to civil life in order to participate in the higher standard of living which had been forced from

the employing class by virtue of trade union pressure.

In order to show that the capitalist system is the most wasteful system imaginable, let me suggest that working-class prosperity on the whole was higher during the war, which was the most destructive period in the history of the race, than previously. When we were spending upwards of eight million pounds per day in waging the war, the workers were able to secure a more equitable share of the wealth socially produced than they are at the present moment.

One is reminded that a great shipping disaster like that of the loss of the *Titanic* brings prosperity to the shipbuilding yards at Belfast, where another ship, equal or superior to the *Titanic*, has to be built to take her place. Again, after the earthquake and fire in San Francisco, when a great city had been devastated, more prosperity to the working class existed during the reconstruction of the city than had obtained hitherto. The modern capacity for wealth production has become so high that we need have little or no worry with regard to this aspect of economics.

Our primary need now is to devise and to organise the most equitable means of distributing the wealth socially produced.

The politicians and statesmen who promised to make this 'a country fit for heroes' after the war appear to be quite oblivious of the teachings of history. It was pointed out by social reformers and accredited writers after the Napoleonic wars that a wasteful expenditure of human opportunities tended to benefit the common people.

Robert Owen, writing after the Peace of 1815, said: 'The war was the greatest and most extravagant customer of farmers, manufacturers, and other producers of wealth, and many during this period became very wealthy. The expenditure of the last year of the war of this country alone was one hundred and thirty million pounds sterling, or an excess of eighty millions of pounds sterling over the peace expenditure. And on the day on which peace was signed, this great customer of the producers died, and prices fell as the demand diminished, until the prime cost of the articles acquired for war could not be obtained.' He goes on further to state that 'barns and farmyards were

full, warehouses loaded, and such was our artificial state of society that this very superabundance of wealth was the sole cause of the existing distress. Burn the stock in the farmyards and warehouses and prosperity would immediately recommence in the same manner as if the war had continued. This want of demand at remunerative prices compelled the master producers to consider what they could do to diminish the amount of their productions and the cost of producing, until these surplus stocks could be taken out of the market. To effect these results every economy in producing was resorted to, and men being more expensive machines for producing than mechanical and chemical inventions and discoveries, so extensively brought into account during the war, the men were discharged and the machines were made to supersede them, while the numbers of the unemployed were increased by the discharge of men from the army and navy. Hence the great distress for want of work among all classes whose labour was so much in demand while the war continued.'

Although written more than a hundred years ago this quotation can be effectively used

as a commentary on the conditions following the world-war, 1914-1918.

Discerning and far-sighted statesmen might have been expected to envisage the problem of a more equitable distribution of the material requirements of human life, especially in the light of their pledges and promises during the period of the war and at the general election which immediately followed. The eight million pounds per day spent so prodigally in the efforts to destroy human life could have been profitably directed into channels which would contribute to the maintenance of higher standards of life than had hitherto been realised in human history. One has only to recollect the appalling destruction which resulted from the operations of enemy submarines to be reminded that this made such a call upon shipbuilding and engineering that these trades enjoyed unexampled prosperity during the period of the submarine war. Boots and clothing were worn out at such a rapid rate in the various theatres of war—bringing abundant employment—that the boot and shoe operatives in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, whilst being pacifists on humanitarian grounds,

are nowadays almost driven to sighing for the outbreak of another world war. The textile workers in Yorkshire, engaged in spinning and weaving the khaki cloth which clothed so many millions of backs, are now walking the streets or working on an average twenty hours per week, because the soldiers who three years ago could wear warm and necessary clothing have been deprived of their capacity to consume and their effective demand has been so seriously diminished by low wages and under-employment.

To return to the statement of Robert Owen quoted above: we might pray for a series of fires, accidents, and shipwrecks, which would destroy a third or even a half of the available goods, machinery, stocks, etc., in order to produce a demand for the replacement of these things, which in turn would set the wheels of industry turning anew.

The essential problem which confronts us all to-day, and appears completely to baffle those who are supposed to be possessed of directive ability, is how best to employ the energies and efforts of all capable and willing hands, in order to produce the maximum

amount of commodities equitably to share amongst the entire community.

We have heard a good deal of the demand for increased production. Increased output in the general and indicative sense is a thing urgently to be desired, provided always that the number of hours employed and the conditions under which the production is carried on, will allow of sufficient leisure in the lives of the producers. Here is this country to-day; there are at least two million adults totally unemployed and probably another two millions not fully employed.

Some time ago I visited an Efficiency Exhibition at Olympia, promoted by that enterprising journal the *Daily Mail.* I wondered whether humanity was becoming stark raving mad when I saw wounded soldiers, some with only one arm and others minus a leg, making furniture and household requisites, being taught various handicrafts; when I saw sightless soldiers basket-making and learning other suitable occupations. I saw dozens of girls making tin canisters, with the assistance of a very complex stamping machine, these canisters to be used for containing petrol. I saw, in fact,

multifarious efforts to promote mechanical and human efficiency on the part of those who were not so well fitted as hundreds and thousands of their fellows who were walking the streets searching for employment, or lining up outside the Labour Exchanges to wait their turn to receive the miserable pittance, which an incompetent administration provides for them, in lieu of the wages for the suitable work which under a well-ordered régime they should be doing.

Any intelligent man must be in favour of increased output, provided there is some guarantee that the increased wealth so produced shall go into the pockets of the workpeople, thus increasing their purchasing power, and not into those of the idle rich, as further plunder in the shape of rent, interest, and profit.

Faced with the enormous increase in the capacity for production of the materials necessary to maintain human life, the employing class and the politicians, who are their pliant tools, might reasonably have sought ways and means of creating more effective demand on the part of that class which produces the requisites of human life. I mean in the form of higher

wages and consequently a higher standard of life, but being devoid of any comprehensive outlook, their one and insatiable desire has been to reduce the effective demand, to reduce the consuming capacity of the workers by reducing their real wages. Wiser and more discriminating men would have looked forward to a period of enormous and protracted prosperity by re-creating that free flow of commodities to and fro which is the breath of the nostrils of the capitalist system. Instead of which, by their expenditure of at least one hundred and fifty million pounds on the Russian war, by their military escapades in Mesopotamia, and by the egregious economic terms of the Reparations Clauses of the Peace Treaties, they have brought stagnation where there should have been circulation.

Lest I should be misunderstood, let me try to make it clear at this juncture that I am not suggesting that the present industrial crisis, arising from the economic antagonisms, are due entirely to the war and to the effects of the war. For more than a century industrial crises have arisen with almost mechanical regularity—boom follows slump and slump

follows boom. Production has become a social process; it is orderly, calculable, and exact. Distribution and exchange, however, of the commodities produced remain almost as anarchical to-day as in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The war, of course, has enormously intensified the present crisis.

Early in 1920, when Lord Shaw of Dunfermline was directed to hold an inquiry at the Law Courts into the application made by the National Transport Workers' Federation for a minimum wage of 16/- per day for Dock and Waterside Labour engaged at the ports, Lord Devonport gave some evidence which has a bearing upon what I have called the inadequate consuming capacity of the bulk of our population. He was asked to tell the court the then existing causes of the congestion prevalent in the Port of London, and said :—

'The absolute cause of the congestions proceeds in the practice of the Government in arranging or permitting the arrival of goods in what I may call "huge lumps." The leading food commodities have been coming along for the last six or eight months with a

total disregard to the storage accommodation available, and they have come in such superabundance that every inch of storage accommodation, not only under the control of the Port of London authority, but throughout the whole Port of London, is full to repletion and consequently the whole capacity having been kept full it is perfectly impossible to take in the huge remainder which has been waiting outside and is continuing to arrive. . . . There are in store in the United Kingdom to-day 150,000 tons of meat, that is sufficient at the present rate of consumption with the home-killed meat to supply the country for over three months, but in addition to that there are 106,000 tons in steamers waiting to discharge at the ports of the United Kingdom or afloat. That is to say, available supplies. When that quantity is dealt with, or considering that quantity has to be dealt with, there is sufficient with the home-killed to supply the country for a further period of over two months. The first figure I gave represents three months' supply to the country; the second figure I gave represents a further two months' supply; and here is a third figure. In Australasia—from

whence we draw these supplies mainly, not entirely—New Zealand, and Australia, already awaiting shipment there is a further 95,700 tons. When that arrives that will give the country, taking in the home supplies as well, a further two months. Now we have had three months, an additional two months' supply and a further two months' supply; that is seven. Now we come on to the fourth figure: Australasia is now killing this season's sheep, the killing season beginning just about now. It is estimated that at the end there will be available 148,900 tons of further supply, sufficient with the home-killed for another three months' supply; so that is ten. Add to that the supplies available in other portions of the world—South America chiefly—which represents two months' supply at the present moment, there are twelve months' supply of meat available; and I may tell you that all these figures were visible six months ago.'

This statement, it will be seen, was made early in 1920, more than twelve months after the signing of the Armistice, when no reasonable excuse could be offered for so taxing our storage and warehousing

accommodation as was the case during the war.

'Twelve months' supply of meat available,' says Lord Devonport, his chief anxiety being to expose the defects of Government control. But while he made his points incidentally, he was present at the Court to resist the application for an advance in wages or 'effective demand' on the part of the Dockers. Here are our warehouses, cold-storages, and insulated steamers unable to get rid of the world supplies thrust on them. Give the workers—dockers and others—a few more shillings per week; in fact, increase their capacity to purchase and thereby to consume a little more meat, and the grievances of Lord Devonport are greatly minimised. But 'No!' in effect, says his lordship: keep down the worker's wages, give him less and less, throw the food overboard if you like, send it to soap or glycerine factories, but do not put it at the disposal of those who need it most and are consequently more entitled to it.

I well remember during the war period itself, when bacon and meat were being rationed, our warehouses, cold storages, etc.,

were taxed up to and beyond the breaking point of their capacity. Who has not heard of tons of apples being allowed to rot in west country orchards, when the people in the towns were unable to obtain even a small quantity of our home-grown fruits? Who does not know of the valuable catches of fish dumped over the sides of trawlers rather than be brought into the market, all for the purpose of maintaining the exorbitant price of fish which finds its way to the fishing ports? Who has not felt pangs of regret on hearing that in the Argentine they are stoking locomotives with wheat, while from twenty to thirty millions of people are faced with famine in Russia and while millions of our own people here in Britain are lacking bread?

It must be repeated and emphasised that nature can and does supply us with all those things which are necessary for our material well-being, but in consequence of a social system which is based upon personal self-interest and private greed, no opportunity exists to give effect to the old socialist axiom: 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs.'

As a trade union organiser I am confronted two or three times every week at conferences by employers' representatives. Well-paid, well-fed, and oft-times, to give them credit, well-meaning individuals, they have no other solution for present-day difficulties than to suggest that the workers shall accept less wages and give more hours. I have attended conferences too numerous to mention where there have been one hundred representatives of the employers' side and one hundred on our own side. Never considering reconstruction and reorganisation, the matter never dawning upon their minds to grow two bushels of wheat where one grew before, but always considering how to wrest from the workers even a small proportion of that purchasing power which their all too inadequate wages provide. Urging increased production and more output is, as Lord Devonport has shown, merely aggravating the existing evil, for our warehouses, granaries, and our cold storages are taxed to their utmost capacity. It will be urged, in fact it has been urged, that any serious diminution in the income from rent, interest, and profit which proceeds to the pockets of the recipients thereof

will not bring about any material benefit in the lives of those who produce all the wealth. This is, flatly, an untruth.

All the energy and effort which is utilised or dissipated in providing super-necessities for an already sated class could be more profitably utilised in providing those things which tend to the material well-being of the working class. Regent Street, Bond Street, Piccadilly, and other fashionable thoroughfares, are devoted almost entirely to the distribution of those things which are by no means necessary to those who have appropriated the purchasing power or effective demands of the mass of the workers. It is neither right nor decent that the well-to-do should ride about in well-appointed motor-cars, while the workers are deprived of the amenities and decencies of life. It is not economically desirable that hundreds of thousands of pounds of potential economic values should be spent in our modern newspapers in advertising those things which appeal to the whims and caprices of people with large banking accounts ; in fact, I am prepared as a socialist to make this statement, that almost every article which needs to be advertised can

be dispensed with. Thousands of paper workers, printers, compositors, machinists, timber fellers, transport, and distributive workers are employed solely to create these channels of advertisement, which in a properly organised dispensation would be totally unnecessary. On all sides we are surrounded by anomalies arising out of the present system of private ownership and control of the means whereby we live.

During the war, constructional work in housing was virtually at a standstill, depreciation and delapidation took place, and no effort was made to replace the house property which had become so obviously out of repair. Since the Armistice the position has not been materially improved. Take the case of Dr Addison, the first Minister of Reconstruction and subsequently Minister of Health, who was pledged to a policy of providing the homes for heroes who had taken part in the war. To-day, the ex-Minister of Reconstruction, so far as reconstruction is concerned, is one of the unemployed, and all the Government schemes to make housing conditions better are gone with the Ministry.

It is not that this country is lacking in the

raw materials for building and constructional work ; it is not the case that we have to import those materials and pay for the importation with exports or in services. Britain is favoured with rich and abundant clay deposits for making bricks and tiles, which are second to none in the world. The Thames and the Medway estuaries are flanked by ridges of chalk, which has only to be kilned to make cement, than which none better exists ; the whole of Derbyshire is on a limestone ridge. This limestone, like the chalk of the Thames and Medway, has only to be properly burnt in order to provide us with a building material comparable with the best Portland cement. In North Wales there can be had by the application of human labour slating material by the millions of tons, and sand can be obtained for the mere cost of transport, round and about our broken coast, as well as in abundant quantities inland. No country is richer supplied with stone of every description than is Great Britain. Here are the primary requisites for making the houses fit for heroes ; dare any one suggest that with two million men unemployed we cannot supply the requisite labour ?

In the densely-populated parts of East London families are ekeing out an existence—one can scarcely call it living—herded four, five, and six per room, and similar conditions obtain in all our large populous industrial cities. Why is it we cannot supply the necessary housing accommodation?

It is almost entirely due to the set of vested interests which stand between labour and the available raw materials. The landlord class desires to exact the utmost toll from all industrial effort before they concede the right to allow the work to proceed. The cement and other combines are making more profits from the present restricted output than they did prior to the war; and on all sides we find a point-blank refusal to allow creative and productive effort to be carried on, unless and until the vested interests are bought out on their own terms. I am prepared to admit there is also some mischievous influence exerted because of the unwillingness of all sections of building-trade operatives to permit of any measure of dilution, but this can be clearly understood and to some slight extent justified. It is the outcome of a position which assures

security to none. The only thing of value which the building operative possesses is his technique. When it is scarce it commands a reasonable price; when it is abundant it declines in value to the bare cost of existence standard, and consequently every effort is made to maintain the craft or technical knowledge as closely confined as possible.

It is the system that is wrong; it is the system which must be destroyed, or radically improved.

Not only are the workers showing an increased and increasing resentment to the social system which so cruelly oppresses them, but they are displaying a marked resentment to their officials and leaders, who have been constrained to negotiate reductions in wages and adverse variations in working conditions. From the point of view we are forced to take in consequence of the stern and unrelenting factors which confront us all to-day, we have been compelled to negotiate these wage decreases rather than see our forces destroyed by ill-timed and injudicious strike action.

Some of the more militant, but less heedful, in the ranks of the proletariat consider the

strike is an end in itself. They think the right to exercise strike action is the beginning and end of trade union organisation. We who have been thrust into positions of responsibility, valuing the strike weapon as we do, have from time to time to point out the obvious drawbacks of a stoppage of creative and productive effort.

We are called organisers of labour, but very little of our time and capacity is given to real organising work, because of the incessant struggle which goes on between the representatives of the employers and those of the employed over the distribution of the national wealth. Sometimes, in moments of cynicism, one is driven to laugh at meetings between representatives of the employers and trade union officials. Managers, chiefs of departments, chairmen and secretaries and members of employers' associations and federations, together with a retinue of officials, are taken from their organising and administrative duties—which appear to me to be totally neglected—in order to offer all the resistance possible to the fight which the workers and their representatives make for the maintenance of a decent standard of life.

From the facts of my own experience, I maintain that two-thirds of the time and energy of those who should be organisers and administrators is employed, not in the work which their positions suggest, but generally in resisting the demands of organised labour, and lately in attempts to deprive labour of much of what it won during the war.

Militancy in the industrial sphere, as I have indicated, has waned, but the more discerning and discriminating of the workers are now transferring their proletarian militancy from the industrial arena by the use of strikes and stoppages to something which may prove of more lasting advantage to them. I mean they are becoming politically more class-conscious and realising that their bargaining power as workmen against the employers has been influenced by the serious rise in unemployment, they are concentrating more and more on returning members of their own class to the publicly-elected authorities, in order thereby radically to change the government and its legislation and administration. There are many well-meaning social reformers who are apt to blame the workers for their ignorance and

apathy as displayed in the general election of 1918. I find amongst my colleagues in the Labour Movement an inclination to pass the responsibility for the present state of affairs on to the working class, because of the manifold derelictions of duty on the part of the latter during the 1918 general election. It must not be forgotten, however, that official labour is very largely responsible for the debacle at the polls on that occasion. Labour, in its official aspect, had taken part with the present government in the old Coalition. Labour had outwardly accepted the idle newspaper clamour that Germany should pay the total cost of the war ; official labour acquiesced largely in the ridiculous Reparations Clauses of the Peace Treaty of Versailles, imagining vainly enough that the British workers would be enriched by impoverishing the German workers. Much time had not to elapse before there arrived disillusionment and a rude awakening. We now see with infinitely more clearness than we did during the war, and especially at the general election, that the tremendous reduction in the standard of life of the mass of the German people is having a nemesis

effect upon our own conditions here in Great Britain.

Deliveries of millions of tons of German coal to France has brought about an unprecedented slump in the mining industry at home; the delivery of the German shipping tonnage has caused widespread unemployment on the Tyne and the Clyde. Quite recently, in my capacity as President of the International Transport Workers' Federation, I attended a meeting of the General Council of that organisation in Amsterdam, and as a result of a careful analysis of the world situation as affecting the European transport and railway workers, we passed unanimously the following resolutions :—

'That this General Council of the International Transport Workers' Federation observes with alarm the continued decline in world trade bringing more unemployment to the men usually engaged in the various operations of transport.

'The Council is convinced that the uncertainty in the rates of exchange between the respective countries is slowly but definitely paralysing that interchange of goods and services which was found so essential before the war.

'The Council warns the workers in the Entente and neutral countries against the appalling but certain results of the steady decline in the standard of life forced upon the workers in Central Europe by the monstrous effects of the peace treaties. In the competition for trade in what remains of a world market, the economic servitude of the peoples of Central Europe must inevitably compel the workers in other countries to accept a reduction in real as well as nominal wages.

'Every effort is therefore called for from all the organised workers, and especially in the Entente countries, to secure a drastic revision of the peace treaties which have been proved to be economically unsound, and morally objectionable.'

The results of the Peace Treaty are made as manifest to the workers in the neutral countries as to the workers in those countries which took part in the war. At a conference held later, convened in Amsterdam, of international representatives of mine workers, metal workers, railway and transport workers to consider the prospects and possibilities of a new war, delegates from the International Mine Workers'

Federation asked the conference to consider the world situation, especially as it affected the miners of France, Germany, Britain, etc., and representatives of the International Miners tabled a resolution on almost identical lines with that quoted above and passed by the International Transport Workers. There had, of course, been no consultation between the two organisations previously; but so painful are the effects of widespread unemployment and universal distress that our thoughts are moving on similar lines.

'It is all very well as far as you have gone,' says the critical reader. 'You have told us again and again what you are against and why you are against it. Will you not tell us what you are for? Tell us what you and those whom you represent want.'

The workers want economic security. They want regular employment, under decent human conditions, with good and sufficient wages. These things are permanently unrealisable under the present system of commercialism and production for profit, so the thoughts and aspirations of an ever-increasing number of the workers, mental as well as manual, turn towards

Socialism and production for use. Those above the £1000 a year standard of life are just as devoid of security as those below; they have, of course, a far greater measure of security. Being in receipt of an annual income rather than weekly wages, they are able to tide over periods of industrial depression and slump better than the wage earners; but one and all, we go in fear of economic, political and industrial changes which threaten the very foundation of our lives.

Socialism is no short cut to some millenium. There is no royal road to the system which will assure security to all those who are willing to exchange individual and collective service to the community for an equitable share of the wealth those services will provide. We see the present system of Capitalism, with its private ownership of land and industrial capital, breaking down before our eyes. 'Tis not a question of whether it is to go, so much as what is to take its place. I am not in a position to offer some cut-and-dried plan with a reply to every imbecile who wants to know 'who is going to do the dirty work under Socialism?' nor do I know who will determine and how it

is to be determined that some shall be navvies and others doctors. I know this, however, that many men to-day who are occupying professional positions are more fitted for manual employment, and that many thrust into positions entailing mechanical drudgery are fitted for better and more responsible work. Some of the critics of Socialism consider that as a system it is immediately realisable but that it is highly objectionable. Those of us who are convinced and avowed Socialists know, alas, that while it is highly desirable it is not immediately practicable, practicable, that is, in any sense of fullness or completeness. No clearly Socialist régime can become operative unless there is the capacity to conceive, the audacity to will, and the power and influence to compel, on the part of a working majority, or at least a formidable minority of the people. We are appreciably nearer to Socialism to-day than we were in 1914; I mean, not only in point of time, which should be obvious, but nearer in consequence of matters due to and arising from the war. The war shook us all out of the ruts in which we had been living; it compelled some realisation that there could

be no peace between nations while Capitalism fought for the right to exploit the undeveloped and under-developed places of the earth. The war took millions of men from their usual occupations and their circumscribed lives, and showed them some of the implications of geography and economics. It taught further the possibility of utilising 'man-power' as it had never been used before and as it certainly is not being used to-day. Socialist evolution was vastly accelerated, not from idealogical motives but by the determinating influence of urgent necessity. Under unrestricted profit-making we should have been deprived of the requisite amount of munitions; unrestricted exploitation of the available shipping tonnage by fabulous freights and consequent famine prices would have brought insurrection. Railways had to be pooled and wasteful competition eliminated; our coal deposits had to be worked, not merely to secure individual gain, but to meet supreme national requirements. The worst forms of profiteering had to be kept in check in order to show that the community was of more importance than the individual.

War or no war, however, Socialism makes

headway because it fills a universal want, and because it is destined to succeed the existing order—or had we better describe it chaos? Thousands of middle class individuals, feeling the inadequacy of the conditions which exist to-day, are considering the utility of our Socialist proposals. My work at conferences and negotiations brings me into contact with functionaries, organisers, and 'entrepreneurs' who represent private, semi-public, and municipal capital in the transport industry. Men with incomes of from £500 to £5000 a year take part in wage negotiations with nervousness, anxiety, and worry almost pitiable to behold. They too are chained to the machine; they, like the workmen whose claims they are employed to resist, are haunted by the spectre of insecurity. They are affected by increases in the cost of living just like, but not to the same extent, as the manual working class; they are affected even more than the workers by an income-tax of six shillings in the pound. Any educational advantages they now enjoy are threatened by the spread of technical, clerical, and scientific education. A concentration of capital under the directing influence of

'big business' may throw them upon the streets like the manual 'hands' they are supposed to supervise.

Socialism is made increasingly inevitable every day. I am not going to attempt to prophesy when or how it will come about; I am quite satisfied in my own mind that come it must, or otherwise the whole of Europe will be reduced to anarchy—from which we are not far removed at present.

The salaried classes in Austria and Germany have reached a plight into which our own similar class may descend. In view of this we frequently find a greater proportion of adherents to Socialism among salaried brain-workers than among weekly-paid wage-earners. On all sides, in fact, may be found little trickling rills and rivulets, feeding the streams, and the streams converging in the larger tributaries, all of which go to swell the ever-rising river of Collectivist thought.

What the workers want may be expressed in the phrase 'economic security'—some form of insurance against unforeseen adversity. We can, and do, insure our houses against fire; we insure our wives and dependents against the

death of the bread-winner. We pool, as it were, our individual risks against most exigencies and contingencies. Socialism would pool the hard-won earnings of the worker with the rent, interest, and profit of the privileged sections of the community, and there would be a universal sense of security, save for those few congenitally indisposed to give willingly of service in exchange for the things which minister to their material needs.

Briefly put, and in an attempt to summarise, I must repeat that although the methods and opportunities to give effect to the wants and wishes of Labour may change, as they are changing, the actual wants of Labour remain more or less constant.

Two million men and women in this country eagerly and urgently want work ; this in order to provide them with the rudiments of a decent existence. Failing work, there must be guaranteed maintenance on an adequate standard of human existence. Those who are in employment want a higher standard of life ; they want better homes, good food, and satisfactory human conditions for their offspring. They want reasonable insurance

against being pushed into the morass of unemployment. And they resent any parade of luxury in the fashionable quarters of the metropolis and the provincial cities, while their lives and the lives of their dependents are stifled and stultified with never-ending and almost unendurable poverty. They want knowledge to a degree they have never wanted before. Culture and leisure they also consider should be their lot to enjoy. They see that in spite of material prosperity they are cheated of the good things of life. They want to travel and they cannot afford the wherewithal so to do. Their children they are compelled to send to the elementary schools, where the hard-worked teachers try to the best of their ability to impart knowledge and provide some sort of education. Whilst in school these children are surrounded by things conducive at least to some measure of culture and refinement, but after an all-too-few number of hours in that environment, the children are thrust into the streets and crowded into their miserable homes, where the beneficial influence of the schools is counteracted and almost destroyed.

The workers feel that they are the legitimate

heirs of all the wealth of the ages. They and those from whose loins they have sprung are responsible for the creation of Britain's commercial prosperity. It is the workers and their kind who make it possible for those of us who enjoy more extensive opportunities to derive the benefits we do. It is the age-long toil of the workers which has built the great fashionable hotels of the West End, beyond the swing-doors of which they never dare to penetrate, unless it be as flunkeys to those who frequent such places. It is the working class who have built and created all the factories and workshops in every country; it is their never-ending genius, their physical strength, their manual dexterity, which produce for the whole community necessaries and luxuries alike. It is the working class who have built our railways, tunnelled the mountain and the river, bridged the valley, excavated the dock, dredged the estuary, made the harbour, and who have contributed in its entirety to the building up of our transport system.

It is these same workers, whose aims I am attempting to describe, who have drained the marshes, cut their way through the forests,

cleared away the almost impenetrable thicket, and made the waste places of the earth habitable and fertile. They and their kind during the centuries gone by have made the parks and spacious country seats of the parasitical rich class. As Kipling has said :—

'Our England is a garden;
But such gardens are not made
By singing
Oh! how lovely! and sitting in the shade.'

The working-class have made the great roadways, have lined them with Italian asphalt, wooden blocks, and granite sets, and have macadamised the road surface, over which the motor-cars of the more favoured glide smoothly and noiselessly. The toiling masses in the mining areas have sunk the pit shafts and gotten the valuable coal from the coal face, at the price of tens of thousands of precious lives. Where the mine owner has invested his capital, the mine worker had contributed blood, bones, and tissue. Our people in the shipbuilding centres make the great ocean-going tramp and the modern passenger liner. Members of the

same class load and discharge the cargoes brought to and from our ports, and the sea-going members of the same class risk the ordinary perils of the deep, and have faced with equanimity the extraordinary perils of the war, in order to bring the food and the necessary raw material to sustain us and our industries alike.

Is it reasonable to wonder that, having produced all this abundance of wealth, they should be audacious enough to demand and expect a steadily increasing share of that wealth which their labour has so produced?

The militant section of the proletariat will not rest content till they and theirs come into their own. They have lost faith in the capitalist system of society; they have seen clearly through its shams and subterfuges. They know that the captains of industry, the lords of finance, of land and industrial capital, have no policy save the unending exploitation of those who render all the necessary services, and they are out resolutely and steadfastly to destroy and to supersede a system which deprives them of those things which all

intelligent men and women know to be essential for a complete life.

The workers' movement will be retarded here and there by the short-sightedness, the avarice and the sordidness of many of their own class. Their demands will be kept back by some of their so-called leaders, who appear to have the same vested interest in the present-day system as the police and the judiciary have in crime, and as the medical profession may have in disease. But ultimately they will profit by every mistake made; they will overcome apparently insuperable obstacles. Having turned their faces in a spirit of fixed and iron resolve towards their goal—the International Co-operative Commonwealth, where industry, science, and agriculture will be subordinated to making this country of ours and this world of ours worthy of all the sacrifices made by the martyrs and prophets and the pioneers since the dawn of history—they will go on until that goal be reached.

THE CASE FOR THE ENGINEERS

By Tom Mann

In common with all others, engineers are subjected to the economic pressure prevailing as a consequence of the system of society, and the special developments arising out of the disturbed conditions of the past six years. It is reasonable to suppose that amongst their number there is to be found the normal percentage having interests in the ordinary affairs of life, including those who show especial concern for social and economic changes, partly stimulated by altruistic motives, and in part by egoistic aims.

This being so, it means that engineers have desires and aspirations, hopes and misgivings, are contented or otherwise like the workers as a whole of whom they are part.

The engineers, therefore, for most purposes may be counted as having aims in common with miners, compositors, railwaymen, textile workers, transport workers or others.

The number of engineers is roundly one tenth of the adult male population of the country, and they are as widely and perhaps as evenly distributed over the entire country as those of any other considerable industry. The percentage of engineers to the total population is increasing, in consequence of machinery being used on an increasing scale in industry as a whole. If shipbuilding be included in the general term, it is probable that no other country has so large a percentage of workers engaged in engineering and shipbuilding as Britain.

In discussing *What is Wanted, and Why*, it is necessary to differentiate between immediate and ultimate wants.

At the present time,[1] with unemployment and underemployment abnormally high, one could say that what the engineers want is full time employment at relatively high wages: obviously that would take us nowhere, so it is necessary to get to fundamentals.

Wages claims and working conditions cannot be effectively considered without dealing with wealth production and distribution. The

[1] February, 1921.

character of the demands, and the relative moderation or vehemence of methods resorted to in making demands, is largely conditioned by the beliefs and views held by that percentage of workmen that exercises influence with the mass.

Born and bred in a working community, where it is of frequent occurrence to have spells of enforced idleness, during which periods there is no income other than the small amount provided by those Trade Unions who have undertaken this responsibility, plus the dole recently provided by the State, the more thoughtful portion of workmen has given considerable attention to the getting of an understanding of the conditions governing the trade which decide whether there shall be work or not, and the conditions under which the work must be done.

Basically, it is realised that life's necessaries are produced by labour from the earth's crust. Though in the earlier stages of civilisation, before machinery was available, that toil was arduous, the power of men being supplemented only by the ox and the horse, yet, taking life five or six hundred years ago in this country,

when no machines existed, and all food, and clothing, and houses, and every other requisite had to be produced by labour, our fathers lived healthily and jollily, and their hours of labour were about the same as our own of to-day.

It is known, of course, that the earth's crust is the only store-house from which supplies can be drawn, known also that the supply is abundant, also known that our power to produce life's necessaries from this raw material is much greater now than at any previous period of history: and yet never in the lifetime of any of us have the children of the workers been adequately fed, clothed, or housed.

The Fault of the Present System

Attention is given to the value of labour, *i.e.* all mental and physical effort shows, beyond possibility of question, that the wealth producing capacity of civilised man to-day, with mechanical and scientific knowledge as now possessed, enables us to produce prodigiously, compelling the conclusion that, given a sensible adjustment of means to ends, there should be no poverty, and its existence merits immediate

and constant attention, till its causes are uprooted.

Investigation shows that the workers themselves do not decide how they will spend their labour force; they seek employment, when they get it they are told what to do, the object aimed at by those who direct the labour force of the workers is not that of seeing that a sufficiency for all shall be produced, but merely that they who control labour shall get saleable commodities to be sold in the world's market for a profit, without any regard whatever to the well-being of the people. Whether the commodities so produced can be bought depends on the purchasing power of the buyers; these buyers are the whole population: ninety-five per cent of the population is the workers themselves, whose power to buy back the commodities they have produced is limited by the wages they receive, which, investigation shows, are only one half of the value they create. They cannot buy back one hundred pounds' worth with fifty pounds!—all they have—and the five per cent not classed as workers are too few to buy the balance, the result is market gluts. Then hundreds of

thousands of warehouses become filled with the products of labour, the necessaries and comforts of life; but no one possesses the purchasing power to buy them, so trade is stagnated, workers are dismissed; they starve and even die for want of life's necessaries at a time when these exist in abundance, but are under the control of those who reserve their possession of them, as they cannot part with them at a profit until months or years pass over. During this time that portion of the workers hardest hit literally has to struggle against death by starvation, and in that struggle they offer themselves for less wages, and so check and pull down the paltry standard the workers had built up.

Such a basis of society, resting on a system of production for profit for a section of society whose members, in their capacity as capitalist controllers of industry, have no regard whatever for the well-being of the people as a whole, such a basis merits no respect from any worker; the greater the success of this capitalist system of production for profit, the greater the demoralisation of the workers. Such at any rate is the belief of those workers who have studied

how wealth is produced, and distributed, and they accept as a sacred duty the task of doing what they can by education and organisation, to spread an appreciation of a system of society based on the principle of co-operation, carrying with it the organisation of industry on the basis of production to adequately provide for the requirements of all, believing, and surely rightly believing, that man's power to co-operate with the forces of nature is such that there is no need for any to be in want. This power is continually increasing as the result of the growth of knowledge. Many things to conquer in various realms of thought and life will tap the energies of man, but this of providing adequately for physical sustenance is already conquered, though as yet we have not reaped the full advantage thereof. This will come ere long, so we believe.

The Various Schools

In dealing with large numbers of men, it necessarily follows there will be more than one school of thought on the subject under consideration ; and in order to get a correct group

of the position, it will be necessary to classify the engineers as belonging to at least three different sections. These may be described as first: The Standpatters,—those who accept the present system and belong to the Trade Union for the ordinary benefits. Second: The Politicians,—those who wish to see a drastic change in the basis of society, but hold that such changes must be brought about by political or parliamentary action. Third: The Industrialists,—Those who seek to bring about a basic change in society, and who contend that the correct way to do this, is to control the labour forces of themselves as workers, and therefore as producers.

THE STANDPATTERS.—To describe these sections more fully that we may gauge the situation, I mean by the Standpatters those who see nothing fundamentally wrong in the present system of society, and who cannot therefore understand their own workmates who show keen concern for social changes. These contented persons quietly conform to requirements of their *superiors*; they are for the most part simple-minded, free-hearted, and unimaginative, but right down good fellows, who cannot

be bothered either with economics, or politics, science, or art ; they show their greatest alertness in a hand at cards, or the backing of a horse. They are real decent fellows for a night out, and it may be nature finds it necessary to continue their type, as every decade seems to bring along about the usual percentage and every workshop has a few of them.

These men belong to a Union purely to obtain the out of work and friendly society benefits ; they are oblivious to any idea of using the Union as a constructive force to change the basis of society. When parliamentary elections are on, they are found to vote in about equal quantities for Tories and Liberals, very rarely for a Labour man, and never for a Socialist. They belong to the John Bull type, not always in appearance, but often exhibiting one or more characteristics of the genial old muddler, whose girth of stomach is more pronounced than his mentality.

THE POLITICIANS.—Included in those I am designating the politicians, are many diligent students of economics, and well informed men generally. They show a keen regard for social reform and take an active part in public affairs

according to their opportunities. They are keen on Trade Unionism, oftentimes taking the liveliest interest in branch work, but they rely upon Parliamentary action for realising any basic change in the structure of society. They favour the Amalgamation of Sectional Unions, and are loyal to Union decisions, but their hopes for real social changes rest on a government which they hope will one day be worthy of, and equal to the task of, carrying measures calculated to remove social and economic grievances, and usher in a Socialist State. Unlike the Standpatters, they see clearly enough the urgent necessity for a change in the basis of society, but having been mentally fed on a profound respect for Parliament, and seeing so many of their friends and persons of repute attaching such importance to the State, they settle down mentally to the idea that some day friends of the Labour Movement will gain a majority in Parliament, and then will take place the Nationalisation of Industry. They find pleasure in saying that whilst they believe in the necessity for an economic revolution, they are undoubtedly in favour of realising this by Constitutional means. When reminded

that the workers' difficulties are economic in character and not political, they argue that the way to cure economic evils is by a wise use of the political machine. These men give close attention at election times, and vote Labour or Socialist; they also in many cases take an active interest in local government affairs.

THE INDUSTRIALISTS.—By the term Industrialist I am covering the various sections, known by various names, but who attach greater importance not only to the power of industrial organisation, but to the purposes for which it should be used than do those already described; and it is well that a full and free statement should be made as to the aims and methods of this section as it is the most rapidly growing section, gaining many adherents from the ranks of those already described as politicians, and destined, if I judge correctly, to exercise an increasing influence as the months pass on. These men are influential in the workshops, therefore they are in close relations with the Shops' Committees, Works' Committees, and Shop Stewards' Movement. Not exclusively so, by any means, as the Works' Committees should be, and generally are, genuinely representative

of all sections, but because those who attach prime importance to industrial action and have confidence in the efficiency of such action naturally take the keenest interest in such agencies, it follows that this type is most frequently found busy in workshop affairs.

To briefly state the case for this section, it is necessary to say, that their keenest desire is to bring about the greatest economic change in the desired direction, in the shortest possible time.

Having no confidence in Parliamentary action, they centre upon industrial action. They are of opinion that however faulty the personnel of Parliament may be, to change that personnel would give no guarantee of the right kind of change taking place. The economic difficulty the workers are confronted with is the fact that the workman's labour power is directed by the employer to suit the employer's economic interests, and the worker is exploited at the point of production. The man using hammer and chisel, or the file, or tending a machine, is thereby creating value; as it is created it ceases to belong to the workman, nay, the instant the labour power of the

workman is translated into actual value by skilfully directing the tools, at that same instant of time the value so created belongs to the employer and not to the workman. The politician says, change the type of man in Parliament, and laws will be passed to prevent exploitation taking place. The Industrialist says there is an easier and surer way of achieving this, and that is, by the workmen in the shops becoming the deciding factors as to the conditions under which they are willing to function as producers of wealth. They have only to agree with each other; shop solidarity will secure the object. By the political method, political solidarity is first wanted, then this on a scale equal to changing the character of Parliament, and then even if Members of Parliament agreed, they could not bring about the changed attitude in the workshops; the actual men in the shops must do it, so that at the best Parliament could only say 'the men in the shops shall have the right to do it.' But long before Parliament could tell the men they might do it, the men in the shops could do it without parliamentary sanction or approval.

The belief is rapidly spreading that parliaments are played out and will never function to achieve the economic emancipation of the workers; and any way, the workers under consideration decline to approach Parliament. They hold, and I think rightly, that for the mind of a workman to be centred upon the government as the chief agency through which we must function to achieve social and industrial changes is not only basically wrong in fact, but so seriously misleads the worker as to take his eyes from the agency of power immediately at his disposal—industrial solidarity—and causes him to lose himself in the quagmire of conflicting interests, babbling for supremacy in a place where words only are used, whilst actions are absolutely essential for achievement.

Present Position of the Engineers

The average wage of the engineer for a full week of 47 hours is considerably less than five pounds a week. The purchasing power of this wage is barely as good as the wage received prior to the war. The better equipment of the

workshops compared with six years ago is of so marked a character that many of them have been revolutionised by up-to-date machinery and efficiency of organisation ; the output per person has increased most markedly in consequence. Sir Robert Hadfield of Sheffield volunteered the statement that 'as the result of more perfect arrangements in the workshops, including the application of more machine methods, the output per head in their engineering establishment had doubled in the space of three years.' The increased application of labour-saving machinery has been on so vast a scale that it is safe to say the capacity for output is enormously in excess of anything that had ever been possible before 1914, not only in the aggregate, but per person ; and the men are emphatically of opinion that *they are entitled to a higher standard of life than that at present within their reach.*

At present, owing to the complicated method of calculation, taking the pre-war wage rate, and adding the bonuses and allowances, much confusion exists ; and the *men demand a consolidated flat rate, and the wiping out of all bonuses. Also, they claim an increase of sixpence*

per hour as a reasonable addition to the existing shamefully low wage, lower than most skilled men, and lower than many unskilled. The employers and the government during the war urged the absolute necessity for engineers to strain every nerve to turn out munitions of all kinds; they were called upon as skilled men to make special tools, to fix these tools, and make them fool proof, that dilutees of both sexes could be called in, and these dilutees were paid fifty per cent higher wages than the engineers who did all the responsible work, and who were promised it would be made up to them when the war was won. Instead of this, the claim for sixpence an hour increase has been ruthlessly turned down, and the feeling of the men so treated can be imagined.

Writing at the end of February, there are 29,636 members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union unemployed, these with the sick and superannuated members making a total of 42,147 members on benefits, out of a total membership of 454,183, or 11.33 per cent.

The Industrial Depression

The abnormal depression at present obtaining is largely due to conditions arising out of the war, the collapse of International Exchanges being a potent factor. This subject was exhaustively dealt with by Sir Alfred Herbert, of Coventry, in a speech he delivered at the festival of the Stoke-on-Trent Association of Engineers on the 19th February, 1921, when he said, 'During the war the exchanges were more or less artificially stabilised, but now they had gone absolutely to pieces, and the effect on their businesses was extraordinary. Those who bought goods in America had to send out 30 per cent more than a pound sterling to buy the pound's equivalent in dollars . . . when they looked at countries to whom they had to sell . . . the exchanges went against them in another way. Before the war a Frenchman wanting to buy from us one pound's worth of goods paid 25 francs for them, now he had to pay 52 francs,' the disparity in Italy was greater. Sir Alfred dealing with Germany said:—

'The problem was, how were they to stand against German competition? Personally he was a free trader in principle, as every man, he thought, must be who was endeavouring to do trade all over the world, but when they got conditions of that kind, totally unexpected and totally new, he began to wobble and to realise that the Government were very sound in bringing in, as they were proposing to do, a Bill which was intended to bring some relief to the manufacturers of this country against the unfair competition of Germany produced by the rate of exchange. Now they had no need to fear Germany as a manufacturing nation except for that question of exchange.

'He was a very firm believer, based on experience, in the superiority of the British workman and in the superiority of British articles. Over the German article they had a big margin of superiority, except in such special lines as the production of fine chemical dyes. In the engineering work in which they were engaged they had nothing to fear from the German article on an even basis of exchange, but with an exchange that was in one respect ten to one against them they were going to

find trade exceedingly difficult, unless they had some protection. With that object there was a Bill in progress of preparation to deal with the matter.'

The workmen being little better than pawns in the international play of forces, realising the anomalies in the breakdown of International Exchanges, expected that the financial experts would have devised ways and means of overcoming the difficulty, if only in the interests of Capitalism itself. What confidence can be placed in industrial and financial magnates, who show such ineptitude as has been shown since the armistice was signed in this matter of exchanges?

At the same gathering of the Engineers' Association addressed by Sir Alfred Herbert, there was present: Professor W. H. Watkinson (Harrison Professor of Engineering at Liverpool University). The Professor put the typical employers' viewpoint in giving advice to the workers as to how they should think and act, in the following terms:—

'Their politicians imagined that it would be possible to carry on by means of out-of-work doles and other artificial ways, such as the

reduction of hours and an increase in the amount of pay.

'Instead of reduction in the time to be worked in some cases they ought to go in the opposite direction. They must work harder, and unless they did they would certainly be left behind. They worked far harder in some of the countries he had visited, and unless they were prepared to do the same, and to work longer than some of them did work, they would certainly have long-continued depression and great suffering. They would have to be prepared to work more than 44 hours a week. He had never worked so little. His time had been 60 or 70 hours or more, and if men would learn to take a delight in their work their main regret would be when it was time to go to bed, and their main desire would be to get up.'

What a gospel to preach at this time of day! when mechanical, metallurgical, and chemical knowledge stand higher than ever in the world's history, when the power of man to control natural forces, and to direct them to the production of all essentials is the outstanding fact of the age! To tell workmen, and engineers at that, that there is no prospect

of increased well-being, including increased leisure, but that they must work harder and longer, and train themselves to take a delight in rising early in order to work, and to regret that the day should finish, and it should be necessary to rest! one is disposed to ask: Are those who so advise really conscious of the irony of the whole position, and can they really believe in the advice so given? If this is to be treated as seriously given then it is an excellent way to cause every man capable of reflection to forthwith declare in favour of some other system of society than that we are now in with such preachers of pessimism. Lord Leverhulme was much nearer the truth when in a speech in Lancashire, he was reported as follows:—

'Referring to the "all-electrical" scheme, which proposes to use coal at the pit mouth, converting it into coke for use of steel works, using gas liberated for making electricity, and by-products into aniline dyes, medicines, and fertilisers, Lord Leverhulme said it was estimated that the scheme would make unnecessary at least half of the labour of the United Kingdom.

'This scheme opened up an enormous field

for investigation in industrialism that promised as great progress as had been made in medicine in the last century. He was convinced that in industrial methods each succeeding year would see less necessity for arduous toil. Men would be replaced by machines, and the machines would do the work more efficiently and with fewer mistakes. They would find at the same time that men working highly technical machines would be superior men.'

The view here expressed fits with the wonderful developments taking place in civilisation generally. The terrible set-back by the war will be overcome, and a reorganisation of forces will take place on a basis admitting of a substantial improvement in the workers' standard of life.

Employers' Demands

The engineering employers demand that employees shall be ready, on the instruction of the firms, *to work overtime regardless of the opinions and desires of the men in the respective districts.* Also, they claim, that they shall *have the right to introduce systems of payment by*

results, *piecework*, *premium*, *bonus*, or other scheme as may be agreed upon.

The employees, organised nationally, and having District Committees watching the interests of the men in the respective districts, are not disposed to encourage some of their members to work overtime, when, in the same district, other men are out of employment. And their experience in the past of *payment by results*, has compelled the belief that in a large number of cases—though not in all—these schemes have been used as the means to intensify the work, and to reduce the wages. That this has happened in hundreds of instances is beyond dispute, and those who have been subjected to such treatment, or know their mates to have been subject thereto, are hardly likely to turn readily in favour of accepting any form of piecework.

Men, by experience, are compelled to take the view that the capitalist controllers of the engineering firms aim at keeping the men in subjection, claiming that the whole establishment and all that is in it is theirs, and the men who do the work are merely tolerated as wealth producers and wage receivers. The

control of the shops is by the managers and foremen, exclusively in the interests of the firms. Such relationship never has and never will bring out the best energies of the men. With few exceptions the conditions are such that men can take no pleasure in their work; and unless they can do so, best results will never be achieved.

How to get Best Results

If men are under constant espionage, if they are treated as though they would take an advantage, fair or unfair, whenever opportunity offers, then, living in such an atmosphere tends to develop the characteristics suspected and feared. The cure for unfair work, and the means of getting all round best results is *for the men to manage themselves, and to manage the shop*. Works Committees and Shop Stewards are steps towards this, but only steps, and it requires now that several other steps be taken to reach conditions where efficiency and well-being shall accompany each other: one of these will be :—

Self-Governing Workshops

A large and rapidly increasing percentage of the members of the Engineering Union desire to see the Union's influence used to enable them to get *control of industry*; put this desire down to any motive, it is sure to increase rapidly, as men will not consciously be content with obeying instructions given by superior people. The principle of collective bargaining has long been talked of and in some measure applied. It is collective bargaining of a sort when trade unions negotiate for their members in the matter of wages; what is now wanted is: That the union shall bargain with the firms for a price *for the whole job, and the union become responsible for supplying all labour, and paying all wages.*

The workmen know more about the workshops than any one; if conditions prevailed that gave them a live interest in their work, individually and collectively, they would themselves see to it that all necessary discipline should prevail. The only approach to this by the employers is collective piece-work, or a

bonus system, this does not get at the heart of it and never will.

Managers of firms who have under the existing system found difficulty in the management of men, and who as managers have of necessity had to line up with the employers and support their special interests, as against the men, may be hypercritical as to the success likely to attend efforts at *self-governing workshops*. But who, having had experience, does not know of the astonishing difference between those practically driven to work, and those attracted to their work by the dual force of economic security, and the pleasure of turning out a good job? The whole psychology of the workers would be changed. The outlook on the job in the shop, and on the shop as a whole would be changed, and each man would be expected to comply with the conditions held to be reasonable by his comrades.

Under this proposed system, time payment would disappear, and a higher form of *co-operative payment* for *co-operative results* would take its place. It would largely, and when universally applied, would completely solve the unemployment trouble. This recurrent

curse of the workers—unemployment—gives no indication of ever being cured till the principle of co-operation shall be applied to industry, apportioning the total work to be done, over the total number to do it.

Collective Control of the job, carrying with it collective responsibility for all affected, would afford scope for a permanent solution of the unemployment problem so far as the principle could be applied.

This question of collective control has been the subject of discussion for a long time with a considerable number of engineers; and the case has been well stated in a series of articles appearing in the Journal of the Amalgamated Engineering Union; written by Mr A. Clifford; the following is an excerpt therefrom:—

'Workshop control means that the workshop shall be self-governing. The workers shall appoint their own foremen and charge hands. They shall arrange the allocation of jobs, and shall be responsible for the output and the productive process in the workshop without the intervention or the domination of the employer or any of his nominees. The workers shall

arrange the working hours and holidays, and the number of workers employed, and shall be responsible for the training of apprentices. Furthermore, they shall have some interest in efficient production, the cultivation of initiative, and the expression of ideas for giving effect to improved methods without fear of detriment to themselves. It means relieving the employer of his responsibility within the workshop, and the workers shouldering that responsibility themselves. Responsibility would involve the development of a latent competency as it would also involve power. Not only would work become more interesting and congenial, but, with a general consciousness of power, men would grow less servile and become more audacious . . . The workers would not receive any wages from the employer, but from the Trade Union. Being employed in a group, any attempt at cutting a contract price would invoke the collective hostility of the whole shop, for the new shop solidarity would be ruffled.'

Control of Industry is called for. Those who attach importance to Parliament want to get control by legislation ; those who attach chief

importance to industrial organisation will use this means of exerting their influence.

As many engineers are connected with various activities covered by various terms, such as: Direct Action, Syndicalism, and Communism, I give brief attention to these.

Direct Action is the term generally applied when the workers withhold their labour to enforce some purpose, and do not trust to a statement of their case before Parliament or elsewhere, or to the reasonable disposition of those having authority to use influence in their direction.

As regards the reduction of working hours, for instance: when the workers in an industry have reached the conclusion that they are economically justified in claiming and obtaining a given reduction, the question arises as to what method shall be used to obtain the end in view? In all such cases it may be assumed the claim is submitted to the employers first, if only to afford them the opportunity of formally refusing. Then, being industrially organised, the question arises—Shall the demand be dealt with by political or by industrial means? Those who strongly favour political means usually oppose

the alternative—or industrial means, and vice versa.

Direct actionists take the view that to approach Parliament, to submit the claim to Ministers of Departments for their favourable consideration, is a waste of time, and evidence of a too simple faith. If it is a case of raising the question directly in the House by a Labour or other friendly Member, such a question is invariably dealt with in a hostile fashion, and defeated, thrown out, jumped on, etc., etc., until, after years of such effort, the men determine to resort to direct action to enforce favourable consideration by plutocratic politicians, themselves connected with industry, and whose economic interests are opposite to those of the workers. If the power to make the plutocracy really uncomfortable is likely to be effectively used by the industrialists, the matter may get tardy support and toleration, but only as a consequence of the known determination of the workers to resort to direct action. The simple-minded man is unable to see why he and his mates should trouble Parliament at all, especially when the method required to reach Parliament is humiliating to a degree, and the

time taken a pure waste, with no result, till stronger industrial action is decided upon.

Many who respect Parliament as the national legislative institution for truly national affairs, other than industrial, consider it entirely correct to deal with industrial affairs by industrial agencies. They know that the term 'unconstitutional,' applied to such action, is a mere bogey term, used on the off-chance of frightening the mentally undeveloped.

Syndicalists are usually Direct Actionists. It may be worth while stating that the term Syndicalist is of French origin, and it is the term applied to all who are industrially organised in France, being synonymous with our term Trade Unionist.

Naturally, as in our Trade Unions, so in the French, there are all shades of thought and belief, and it transpired a generation ago in Paris that the Trade Unionists and Socialists used their influence with the Municipal Council of Paris to build a large hall, that should serve as a rendezvous for the unemployed, and in connection with such hall should be offices for the use of the union secretaries, and such hall and offices were built and maintained by the

Municipality ; the unions paying a moderate rent for the offices occupied. In time it transpired when the unions were engaged in disputes with employers, that they were called upon to submit their books of membership and accounts to the inspection of the police, and when a union refused to allow their books to be so inspected, knowing that information so obtained was used against them, they were told that such refusal would carry with it expulsion from the offices occupied. Rather than submit, the union left the Municipal premises known as the Bourse du Travail, *i.e.* Office of Labour, or Labour Bureau : and soon quite a number of other unions also left, and these took other premises and paid for them, and so escaped the claim of the police to search their books. These latter were the more independent and courageous of the unions, who resented dictatorship ; others of a milder or more constitutional type remained at the Bourse du Travail and conformed to the requirements of the authorities ; both of these sections were Syndicalists, being members of Syndicats, but those at the municipal offices or Bourse du Travail, were more generally known as Socialists, because they

resorted to municipal and parliamentary action in orthodox style; whilst those who resented the authorities dominating over them, departed more and more from political action, and turned increasingly to industrial action or 'Action Direct,' just in the same manner as our own shop stewards and Industrial Unionists do. Some writers have endeavoured to read into Syndicalism an elaboration of doctrines that the majority of Syndicalists have no knowledge of. Several intellectuals and literary men have found satisfaction in enlarging upon the profound philosophy of Syndicalism; the real fact is that Syndicalists are trade unionists who have no confidence in the organised state and therefore aim at bringing about Social and Industrial changes by economic organisation, and the control of industry by those engaged in the various industries, in the common interest.

I may here remark that I visited Paris on several occasions for the express purpose of getting into direct contact with the Syndicalists, and spent much time with them, and so ascertained precisely what was the basis of their activities and the principles they held. I have

also been in other countries in Europe, not only in contact with the Syndicalists, but in close fraternisation with them, and I have for a period of years advocated exactly the same principles and policy in this country.

INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM.—In 1905 the more advanced members of the Trade Unions and Socialist bodies in the United States decided to hold a conference to consider the possibility of more vigorous action than then characterised the American Trade Unionists. This convention was held in Chicago in June of that year, 1905, and then was formed the Industrial Workers of the World, a body which has been particularly active, and has received the attention of the police and government, as I view it, to the credit of the I.W.W. and to the discredit of the authorities. Largely as the result of their activities, the term Industrial Unionism has been widely popularised, and a large number of the Trade Unionists of this country believe wholeheartedly in the principles of Industrial Unionism.

This involves the recognition that machine methods applied to industry have already largely destroyed the difference between the

skilled and the lesser skilled workman. No industry has done so much to destroy this difference as the engineering industry itself, and as a consequence of the invention and elaboration of machine tools, the percentage of highly skilled men in engineering is a constantly diminishing quantity. The employers hitherto have refused to pay the fully skilled man's rate to any man on a machine. In actual fact cases exist where the man on a special machine receives a little above the full rate, but this is merely incidental. Quite recently, at what is known to engineers as the Central Conference, held monthly at York, a reference to the conference was a claim for the payment of the full rate to one man engaged on a new machine, whereby he was able to do the same amount of work formerly done by eight fully skilled men, who had been paid the full rate in each case, seven were dispensed with altogether, and the one man employed in place of the previous eight did not receive so high a wage as any one of those formerly employed. This is an indication of the way improved appliances operate on those who make them and manipulate them.

SECTIONAL UNIONS.—Trade Unions have been and still are far too numerous. In this country there are fully one thousand unions, and not more than twenty industries. In the engineering business successful efforts were made last year to unite in one body ten separate unions comprising a membership of 455,000. There are still another dozen unions in the engineering industry, which, if united, would bring the membership up to over a million. Then there are the lesser skilled, also well organised, but with whom the skilled so far have not co-operated, to the serious detriment of all concerned.

The Industrial Unionist desires to see *one union only* for each industry,—whether the workers are classed as skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled;—and for both sexes; all who work at the industry, to be in one organisation, departmentalised to admit of efficient working. This principle being applied to each industry it would then become an easy matter to decide what percentage of workers was required for each occupation, and by a clearing house arrangement dove-tailing all interests, it would result in *one union for all industries.*

Evolution will not cease to operate whether we approve or disapprove. Human Society will continue to undergo transformations even if many humans are never conscious of such changes. The workers are now at the position when they must soon demonstrate the power and disposition to control their own destiny, and the signs of the times indicate that they will be equal to the doing of this. If this conjecture is falsified by later events, it is all the same necessary to get control, and will later on also be necessary to carry on the work of organisation, and that organisation should be of the most perfect kind for securing the truest interests of *all workers*.

COMMUNISM.—In the light of present day developments and the activities in the ranks of the workers, I consider it necessary to be quite explicit as to where we stand with regard to Communism.

The majority of the workers as yet have shown no pronounced disposition in favour of Communism. Bearing in mind my description of the outlook of the engineers in the earlier portion of this chapter, it would not be expected that a very large percentage of engineers would

be avowed Communists. But in the country generally there is undoubtedly a considerable number who are quite clear-minded as to what Communism stands for, and they are undoubted adherents of this school of thought, and there is as large a percentage to be found in engineering circles as in any other section. The basic principle of Communism is identical with true co-operation; the co-operator with a knowledge of his subject does not mean by co-operation a mere grocery store, or a thousand of them, nor does he in any way limit the application of co-operative principles to the distributive trades. He looks forward to the day when the Co-operative principle will be applied to all industrial affairs, manufacturing and distributive, and of course including transportation. Indeed, the members of the Engineering Union are constantly reminded by their rules that they should have regard to co-operation. Thus in the preface to the Rule Book of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, after urging the young member to bestir himself as a trade unionist, he is told :—

'If we do this, we may leave to a future generation not only a trade, but the means of

maintaining its best interests, until some more general principle of co-operation shall be acknowledged in society, guaranteeing to every man the full enjoyment of the produce of his labour.'

This same statement had appeared in the Rule Book of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers for the whole of its seventy years of existence, until its inclusion in the amalgamation of last year in the union known now as the A. E. U., and one of the declared objects of the union to-day as set forth in rule reads :— 'The extension of co-operative production to assist in altering the competitive system of industry for a co-operative system.'

The Communists of to-day consist very largely of the more advanced Socialists and the Industrial Unionists. The ultimate aim of Communism is of course economic, social, and political freedom for all ; and this involves the abolition of a master class, of private ownership of the means of life, and of the possibility of exploitation of man by man.

Naturally what has taken place in Russia has given an enormous impetus to the spread of Communist principles, and the belief that

the British Government has been grossly unfair towards Russia since the revolution in that country, has given a further stimulus to revolutionary ideas in this country ; and working engineers have the best of reasons for realising the effect of the British Government setting every possible obstacle in Russia's path and hitherto refusing to open up trade with that country, except upon impossible terms.

Thousands of our members, in Lincolnshire and elsewhere, have all their lives, prior to the war, been engaged on manufactures for Russia ; that country wants the results of our men's labour now, more than ever before in their history, but the authorities block the way to trade, and *our members are among the unemployed as a consequence.* We have studied Communism, some of us have been devotees of Communism for much more than a quarter of a century, in which number I include myself. At the present time I am General Secretary of the Engineering Union, these members of ours that I have referred to as unemployed, might have been fully employed but for the reactionary policy of the British Government; this policy was directed against Russia because

Russia endorses Communism, and we Britishers, many of us at any rate, are Communists at heart and by open avowal. A mad world truly; but we Communists are profoundly convinced that the principle of common action for the common good will assuredly yet prevail.

ITALY. As indicating the widespread character of the principles and methods under consideration, it is interesting to notice what is now happening in Italy. Some months ago a bold stand was made by the Italian Syndicalists for control of the factories, etc. A compromise was struck with the government which undertook to guarantee by legislation that the workers claim to control should be respected. The government has now introduced a bill, ostensibly for this purpose, which bill, however, ignores the Shop Committees, which exist and function practically everywhere in Italy, and the promoters of the bill may and probably are deliberately aiming at checking the movement they cannot destroy. Still, it is significant that such legislation should occupy the time of the Italian Parliament.

From what I have written it should not be

difficult to gather :—What it is the engineer Wants, and Why he wants it. To be more precise as regards immediate requirements would be difficult, and to be less definite as regards the ultimate objective would not be honest, as I view the matter.

Tendencies clear and strong are discernible as regards organisation ; one is that the days of Craft Unionism are numbered. The skilled men can no longer with safety to themselves decline co-operation with all other sections. To attempt to stand aloof from those who have not served an apprenticeship to a skilled trade, and to ignore them in negotiations which will decide working conditions, will be seen to be suicidal, therefore it will not be upheld, notwithstanding the old time 'Standpatters.'

The one and a half millions of workmen in the engineering and cognate trades are getting closer together, and in a time of crisis will be sure to devise ways and means to make solidarity a fact. There is no burning desire on the part of any section to see conditions arise necessitating either strike or lock-out. The power of rightly directed organisation should prove equal to the securing of necessary changes,

but we have had more than enough experience to know that clearly avowed objectives are necessary, and that the policy must be essentially militant in character, or the necessary fundamental changes will not be brought about by deliberate aim and endeavour. The alternative, whether made necessary by incapacity to correctly sense the situation when the time for peaceful and effective action could be taken, or by action precipitated elsewhere, involving us in the area affected, will mean revolutionary action of the sudden type, when changes will be intensive and extensive, and the nature and extent of which it is needless to attempt to forecast.

Being myself genuinely optimistic as regards the future, believing we are upon the eve of great and important readjustments, I am confident that the generation just entering the world's industrial arena, with the experiences of the past to guide them, and the aspirations and yearnings for a worthier world, prompted by nature, and stimulated by economic pressure will prove equal to the great task that will befall them. And the outcome of it all will include

a condition of society with poverty banished entirely, with such a mastery over raw material that there will ever be an abundance of life's essentials for all, including the necessary educational opportunity for every one, worthy of a people destined to advance physically, mentally, and spiritually.

NOTE.—The change in the industrial conditions in the year from Feb., 1921, to Feb., 1922, has been to treble the number of unemployed in the Amalgamated Engineering Union. The number of unemployed in Feb., 1921, being 29,636, and the number in Feb., 1922, being 92,884, or 27.03 in 1922 compared with 11 per cent. a year ago.

At the present time two important matters confront the engineers; one is, Lock-out Notices have been served by the employers to the men, because the rank and file insist upon adhering to their old practice of dealing with overtime questions by means of their District Committees, this the Employers object to.

The other important matter is—The Employers demand that the amounts received during the war, to meet increased cost of living, amounting all told to 26/6 a week, per man, must now be deducted from wages.

WHAT WE WANT AND WHY

By Noah Ablett

I do not pretend to be a literary man. But I know that the work of a journalist is to convey ideas in the clearest and most simple way so that the public shall understand, as easily as possible, what the writer intends to say. Writing of the Labour movement I know of no way to tell my story better than to relate the experiences I have been through, in order to show how I have been forced to come to the conclusions in which I now firmly believe. Therefore this article must be slightly biographical.

I am the tenth child of a family of eleven children and in consequence escaped the poverty and hardships associated with a large working class family. All I know of those hardships are the stories told me by my mother and what I have seen of my friends. My mother often told me how she used to manage

on washing-day by tying a piece of linen to her foot and to the cradle and so combining the occupations of rocking the cradle and washing at the same time. It is the ambition of every large working class family in Wales to set aside one member of the family to be a preacher—at least in Nonconformist families—and early on I was given to understand that my destiny was to be a preacher. As a boy of twelve I did preach in some of the chapels of my native locality. But at fifteen I had left the chapel and was studying for the civil service—for the excise service. Before I was eighteen a severe accident happened to me which had a great influence in forming my opinions. My father was a very hard and skilful workman and I was brought up in an atmosphere of great deeds performed at the coal-face by members of my family. I am only five feet six in height and weigh ten stone, and so I cruelly abused my body to keep up the family tradition of hard and successful work. The man who worked next to me—that is the next working place, or stall, as it is called in South Wales—had the reputation of being a ' slasher,' or a man who could produce

more output than those working in neighbouring places. I was determined that he should not beat me, and the result of this determination was that a piece of coal weighing over four tons fell on my leg, causing a compound fracture. This gave me furiously to think, and certainly lessened my ardour in the matter of output. As a result I began to study intensely for the civil service, and it frequently happened that when my father came to call me for work he found me fast asleep with pen in my hand at my study table. I was doing very well and had great hopes of passing my examination. In order to make success more certain I had saved enough money to keep me three months at a college. However, before going to the college I consulted a doctor. To my dismay the doctor advised me not to go to college. I had a compound fracture of the leg, two fingers broken, and a small growth in the nostrils, and this he assured me would prevent me being allowed to enter the civil service. I have since learned that this is not so, but at the time I fully believed the doctor and spent the next year and all my money in ways I do not now care to think about. But the

idea of escaping the dangers and hard work of mining became ever more firmly fixed in my mind. This at first was a purely selfish ambition. But events were about to happen which were to broaden my mind and compel me to think that my difficulty was only a part of the general difficulty. I felt like a trapped animal. Up to this point my ambition was a purely selfish one and I was not troubled about my comrades who, if I escaped, would still have to endure the horrors of the mine as they were in those days. Had I been able to escape from the mines at this period of my life it is highly probable that I should not to-day be described as an agitator.

About this time it became necessary for me to remove from my working place, to a working place in another seam. Here I discovered that the agreed list of prices for different kinds of work incidental to coal getting were not being carried out—by the management—in one important particular that meant a substantial underpayment. I complained, but as the matter was not attended to I reported the matter to the trade union of which I was, of course, a member. Up to this time my

relations with the management were perfectly friendly, but I was now to discover that by reporting to the union I had committed the cardinal sin for which there is no forgiveness. My work, which formerly had been quite satisfactory, was now subjected to the most minute criticism, and trivialities were monstrously magnified. But this had the effect of driving me to the union and I began to realise that my union was my only defence. I began to attend regularly and began to get some glimmering of the idealism that permeates that movement.

This is not a biography, but, if the reader will bear with me, I feel I must give two more personal incidents. My father was now advanced in age and could not continue to perform the more strenuous kinds of mine labour, so he was given a lighter kind of work, but because of his long service at the colliery he was paid a higher rate than was usually paid for that class of labour. I was now a member of the committee of the union, and began to take an active interest in the work. One day, however, on arriving home early from work, my father and mother were seated on each side

of the fireplace looking very gloomy. I was horrified to discover that my father was to have a reduction in wages. I at once came to the conclusion that this was a penalty for my activities. I had never before nor since felt so indignant, and I immediately rushed back to the pit and on my own initiative wrote and posted up notices that a meeting at the pit top was to be held, and I was wild with impatience to address the men on my wrongs. But a few minutes before the men were due to come up the pit shaft an official of the union told me that the manager had sent for him and had told him that the notice to my father had been cancelled. So the meeting did not take place. But I shall never forget this incident, which was the turning point of my life. I commenced to study socialist literature, and read Blatchford's *Britain for the British*, and eventually went through *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx, since when I have been a convinced Socialist, or as I prefer, a convinced Communist.

The other incident I want briefly to refer to is my, what is called, 'victimisation.' I continued to take a prominent part in negotiations with the management and was put on a

sort of committee to settle a price list. There is no doubt that I was the chief obstacle preventing complete acceptance of the owners' proposals. The managing director of the firm came to see me at my working place underground—a most unusual proceeding. He was very frank and told me that I must choose between becoming either a member of his staff or dismissal. I refused to join the staff and on the next pay-day was 'paid off.' At this time the workmen of the whole of the coalfield were about to tender notices on a general grievance and I was advised by my friends that my grievance would be forgotten in the general grievance, and that the time was inopportune for a local strike. I—as I think now—foolishly accepted this advice, with the result that I was unable to get work for six long, unforgettable months. I would approach a pit top and an under official would give me work. But when I turned up next day I would find that the manager had refused to sign the paper giving me permission to work, on every conceivable excuse. Sometimes it would be that a sudden fall had limited the number of places available, another an unsuspected fault

had occurred in the strata. Invariably the excuse turned out to be a lie, or, at least, a half truth. After six months I managed to obtain work at a colliery where the manager had recently come from another coalfield to whom my name was unfamiliar, as he frankly admitted to me a month later, but by this time I was an official of the local union lodge and was in too strong a position to be removed.

Have you ever been unemployed with not the remotest prospect of obtaining work unless by changing your name or some other deceit; have you ever had the feeling that you were being hunted and cornered like a trapped rat? If so, then I am confident you are or will be a convert to the views I am about to put forward on the demands of the miners. These, then, are the pyschological conditions that inevitably breed 'agitators' of men in whom the spirit of resistance is not wholly crushed by oppressions.

Now, before putting forward our demands and remedies, let us take a brief look at the coal hewer at work. Karl Marx, when ever he referred to the expansion of the mining industry, always used the expression—so many more men 'condemned' to work in the mines.

The hewer down in the mine away from the sunlight and fresh air, sometimes in a temperature up to 90 deg., every moment of the day inhaling coal and shale dust, perspiring so abnormally as few men in other industries can realise; head throbbing with the almost inhuman exertion; the roof, perhaps, eighteen inches low, perhaps, twenty feet high; ears constantly strained for movements in the strata on which his limbs or his life is dependent, breathing always noxious smells due to the absence of any kind of sanitation, and to gases given off by water and the often imperfectly diluted natural gases of the mine; subject at any moment to the terrible list of mining diseases, most common of which is the dread nystagmus, which may, if neglected, lead to insanity; liable always to wounds and death from falls of roof and sides, and ever and over all the sickening dread of the awful explosion; such a man is entitled to our sympathy and our respect—but what he frequently gets—is abuse.

WHAT WE WANT AND WHY

What the Miners Demand

I can summarise our immediate demands under the following heads:—(1) maximum possible degree of safety attainable in mining; (2) a six-hour day; (3) a minimum wage sufficient to keep him in reasonable comfort, to rear and decently educate his family, and to provide reasonable recreation and holidays; (4) when physically unable to work due to age, or infirmity caused by his employment, a pension to enable him to live in comfort; (5) control over the conditions of his employment, and (6) in order to secure these demands the elimination of the private ownership of the mines.

Safety

Let us deal with No. 1.—Safety. *Is a maximum degree of safety in mines possible under private ownership?* Safety in mines above all entails a large initial cost. To adequately stow the vacant roads and spaces after the coal has been worked, to maintain the ventilation at

its maximum efficiency, to dilute or otherwise render harmless the dangerous small coal, to prevent stagnant pools of water and provide plant for adequate pumping, and to provide a decent system of sanitation, etc., means a considerable addition to the cost of producing coal.

To do this work efficiently is admittedly very costly. I have examined several collieries in South Wales and a few in Yorkshire. I have had hundreds of conversations with miners in all parts of the country and I think I can fairly say that I have never heard of a single instance where the conduct of a colliery is up to the standard of safety asked for by the Mines Act, 1911. It is common ground that even if that Act was rigidly adhered to the mines would not by far be in that condition of safety that they might easily be, by a greater expenditure of money. While, as we might expect, some mines are managed more carefully, and less regard to the cost of safety is had than is the case in others, the tendency unquestionably is that the average safety standard approximates to that of the poorest mine. Why is this the case? The answer is—and it is an answer of

sinister significance—*that it is cheaper to take risks than to expend the money necessary to the maximum possible safety.* Colliery owners are not angels, but even if they were better men than they are, this ugly fact would always be a temptation.

In mining the incentive of profits inevitably means a big casualty list. With all the elaborate machinery of Mines Acts, the slight increase in Mines Inspectors, the restraining influence of the powerful Miners' Federation of Great Britain, the casualty list is four men killed every twenty-four hours, Sundays included, and nearly 200,000 wounded, some maimed for life, and the slightest recorded in this total, incapacitated for seven days. This is appalling, and no intelligent miner can ease his conscience by acquiescing in this terrible state of affairs. Surely every decent minded man agrees that human life is more sacred than private gain. If that be so then an impartial study of the history of mining for the last century must carry the sorry conviction that thousands and tens of thousands of lives have been lost because mining is conducted primarily for private gain.

There are on the market, at the present time, hundreds if not thousands of safety devices, for the prevention of overwinding, patent shackles to prevent trams and tubs running away when the rope breaks, safety shot-firing appliances that would reduce accidents to the absolute minimum, iron umbrellas for negotiating holes in the roof, and a great host of other humane devices that if at present introduced into the mining industry would reduce the death and accident roll very considerably. Why are they not introduced? The answer is that they are a little more costly than present methods.

Why does not the Miners' Federation of Great Britain prosecute the colliery company? If only it could! If it had the power there can be no question that hundreds of lives would be saved each year. But the Mines Act provides that the workmen can only report infringements of the Act to the Mines Inspector and he, in turn, has to report to the Home Office, and only when the latter thinks the matter is of such importance as to demand a prosecution, can such a prosecution take place. One of the most urgent demands, therefore,

of the miners at present is that they should be empowered by law to prosecute the colliery owners for neglecting safety precautions. If this power were granted by Act of Parliament it would revolutionise the whole mining industry and, beyond question, reduce the terrible casualty list.

A Six-Hour Day

It is not now necessary to argue, in detail, the merits of this proposal, since the Sankey Commission, after an exhaustive hearing of all the available evidence, recommended that the hours in the mining industry should be reduced to six hours per day in August, 1921, if the state of the industry would permit. It is necessary, however, to point out that the proposal, in practice, will not mean an actual working day of six hours. At the average colliery it takes half an hour to get the men down the shaft and another half-hour to raise them again. So that in the average colliery the first man down the shaft will be half an hour in excess of the six hours and the last man up the shaft another half-hour, or an average

of about six and a half hours. It must also be remembered that the bulk of the miners do not live near the colliery and have to be conveyed to the pit in workmens' trains which will run an hour before the shift commences and return an hour after the shift finishes. So that in general the miner will be eight hours on the property of the colliery, excluding the time it will take to come from his home, the workmens' train, to change his clothes and to partake of his daily bath. It will, therefore, be safe to say that if eight hours are allowed for sleep ten will be consumed for work and preparation for work, leaving a leisure time of six hours per day. To those persons who would begrudge the miners this amount of leisure I can only say that if they worked in the mines for a time their opinions would speedily change.

A Minimum Wage and Abolition of Piecework

Since 1912, and as a result of a hard fought strike, the miners have enjoyed a legal minimum wage. Prior to this wage the conditions

of the coal-getter, who worked on piecework, were in an appalling state. I have come across some extreme cases where the coal-getter during certain weeks, due either to unlucky changes in the seam or lack of facilities has found himself, when coming to pay his assistant, without sufficient money to do so, and has had to go home actually in debt. I question very much whether the wage conditions in any other industry have ever been so bad as to yield such results. The element of 'luck' or the great variations in the condition of a working place largely determine the ability of the coal-getter to earn wages. A place with good roof, a thick section of easily worked coal may change in one week. The roof may become very brittle and dangerous, the section of coal may become thin and the coal may be hard or 'stiff' to work, and, on the other hand, the place may change for the better, and the coal-getter may for a period earn comparatively good wages. This fact I believe is the foundation for those stories, one sees frequently in the Press of the fabulous wages of miners; of how he feeds his dog (all miners seem to have dogs in these stories)

with his daily beef-steak, port wine, and so on. A miner may in a period of good luck double his average wage. The fact, however, is that according to the figures supplied recently to us by the Government the average wage of the whole of the miners of Great Britain in 1914 was 6/5.6, and in March, 1920, was 16/11.9 per shift, and the 1920 wage is rapidly going down in the direction of the 1914 wage.

These variations in the working place make it impossible to arrange for an equitable system of wages on a piecework basis. One man in a lucky place will produce with comparatively little effort three times the amount of coal produced by another man in the same seam using almost superhuman efforts. And so it can and does happen that the man who puts forth the least energy gets the highest wages. In pre-minimum wage-days these inequalities were enormous. While they have been minimised since the Minimum Wage Act of 1912 they are still very considerable. And it must not be assumed that the minimum wage is invariably paid. The refusal of managers to pay this minimum is frequently the cause of disputes in all parts of the British coalfield, that

is, because the Act does not make the minimum wage unconditional. It is hedged round with conditions which frequently enable the employers to evade payment.

The present method of dealing with these inequalities is, in the first place, to fix a price list for each seam. If the coal-getters in the poor places cannot earn the minimum wage on this price list the manager of the mine at his own discretion gives these men a certain allowance which may be equal or perhaps slightly in excess of the minimum wage. But this does not get rid of the profound injustice of paying the man who has to work the hardest, and under the most adverse and dangerous conditions less wages than the man in the lucky place. There is no method, however elaborate, under a piecework system that can adjust these inequalities to anything more than the merest approximation to equity. Under a system of piecework there is always the temptation to over-work which invariably has serious consequences. However serious this may be to a man in a mill or factory it is intensified tenfold to the miner underground in semi-darkness with probably a brittle roof over his head.

Driven by the spur of piecework, I have in common with most coal-getters frequently risked life and limb by neglecting to adequately support a dangerous roof in order to increase output on which wages depend.

Broadly speaking, half of the workers in the mines are coal-getters on piecework, while the other half are workmen on a fixed day-wage. Of the pieceworkers, about a third of them are so fortunately placed as to be able to earn more than the minimum or 'make-up' wage. No one can say authoritatively what the opinion of the British miner is on this question, but in the South Wales coalfield—which is the largest—a ballot was recently taken, and a majority vote in favour of the abolition of piecework was secured. The argument of the coal-owners is the ancient one that to abolish piecework is to destroy incentive. But this argument loses all force when it is remembered that only about a fifth of the men employed in the mining industry are genuine pieceworkers, and the argument is never used against the others. Whatever may be said in favour of piecework in other industries, in the darkness of the mine, entering each day a part

of the earth where no human foot has ever trod, caution is of the first importance—a caution most difficult to attain under the hustle and bustle—the lash of piecework.

The solution of these difficulties lies in the abolition of piecework and the payment of wages on a flat-rate principle. For five years miners, whether coal-getters or day-wage men, have been receiving nearly half of their daily wages on a flat-rate. The idea has captured the imagination of the miners with such force, that although they have had to abandon the operation of the flat-rate for eighteen months I venture to predict that there will be no peace in the British coalfield until flat-rates are restored and piecework abolished.

Old Age Pensions

There is no point I can urge for miners in preference to all workers for an old age pension, other than what I have already tried to make plain, namely, the nature of their work. On the general humanitarian grounds of old age there is unquestionably a strong case for all workers who have contributed to the production

of the necessaries of the community. When age has robbed them of the power of further contribution, the community should step in and pay the man or woman whose powers have waned, a wage that could keep them from the workhouse. If this is a sound argument for the worker, in general, then it is intensified in the case of the miner, who when he arrives at sixty years of age is generally deformed; his back bent; his complexion no longer 'shines'; his memory has gone; and, in short, he is no longer a man so much as a caricature of a man.

Control over the Conditions of his Employment

During the last few centuries we have seen a great struggle for the modification of the Constitutions of all countries, in the direction of a greater control by the people, of the government of their country. And we have arrived, in several stages, from Absolute Monarchy to Parliamentary Government, and in this country to the enfranchisement of the majority of the adult population. Every class whose power has had to be modified

has assured the succeeding class that the country was going 'to the dogs': in quite recent history we read solemn essays on the absurdity of giving the vote to an agricultural labourer or a domestic servant. Yet no great alarm is felt to-day when an agricultural labourer sits in Parliament, and no greater disturbance need be anticipated when in the near future a domestic servant sits there.

The same struggle that was formerly political is now being transferred to industry, and nowhere more so than in the mining industry. This is no doubt due to the fact that the mining industry is situate in areas where the mining population predominate numerically. Be that as it may, there is no lack of evidence that the resentment of the miner is deep, and growing deeper, against the conception of the mineowner that the function of the miner is not to reason why, but to earn his minimum wage until he dies.

The miner is beginning to look upon the mining industry as a national institution, that ought to be national property. The notion that used to obtain credence within my own knowledge, that mineowners invested their

money in mining so as to provide employment for miners, would to-day be received with contemptuous scorn. He now realises that he is considered merely as a cog in the great mining machine: he doesn't know his employer, he only knows of some limited company: he has no voice in the price at which the coal he produces is sold: nor does he know how or where this coal is distributed. He knows that many improvements could be effected in the industry that would enable the coal to be sold more cheaply to the community, and at the same time improve his own wage position. But in all these things he has not as yet the power to give effective articulation to his aspirations. This condition of things cannot last, together with the growing realisation, of his servile position. That this is so one need only observe the change in the character of the miners' demands during recent years: the question of wages do not now receive any more attention than the question of status. The idea of status has come to stay: its dynamic force is stronger than any opposition: ultimately—or in the not distant future—it must be realised.

The Fetters of Private Production

All that I have written of, represents only the fundamental issues that confront the differences between 'Labour and Capital.' There are innumerable points which space will not allow me to develop in detail. But the main point of all must strike the reader that the remedies for the grievances of the miners must be so drastic as to affect not only the mining industry but industry in general.

Can we trust the safety of the miner to the man whose pocket interest conflicts with the interest of the safety, the lives and limbs of the men whom he employs, to the men who think more of safes than safety. Can any fair-minded man agree that the tribunal to decide the wage upon which a miner should exist should be composed of mine-owners or men of the same class? Ought the hours of labour to be determined by men who have no fixed hours, but have the money and leisure to do as they like? The miner says, in the most emphatic way, that to such conditions he will never submit. What then is the alternative? The

system of conducting industry for private gain has been tried and has failed; failed because all the reforms that the ordinary man in the street thinks equitable, they refuse. And boiled down their refusal is associated with their pocket interests.

Mining as an industry cannot be conducted with advantage both to the miner and the consumer. Why? Because the owner demands his livelihood at a generous rate—for which he performs no active service in coal mining—a rate which actually stops the productivity of the industry. When this state of affairs occurs it is quite clear that the industry requires a new principle before it can satisfy the requirements of all the parties concerned. When an industry is clearly seen to be unable to provide equitable conditions of labour, and to satisfy the demands of the people who are supposed to own the industry, then that industry on its own principles of working has shown it is a failure and must be replaced by some different system that can meet both requirements.

WHAT WE WANT AND WHY

by J. BROMLEY

General Secretary, Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen

'If I'm yon haughty lordling's slave—
By nature's law designed—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty or scorn?
Or why has man the will and power
To make his fellow mourn?'

THIS stanza from the dirge of Burns's *Man was made to Mourn*, which appeared on the front cover of the first Rule Book of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen when the Society was formed in February, 1880, and has remained in the Book of Rules ever since, pretty well sums up, not only the feelings of the rugged footplate pioneers of our union, but of their successors of the present day.

In 1888 the Society started as its official organ the *Locomotive Journal*, a monthly publication, which is still issued, and, as further evidence of their outlook on life, the members printed on the title-page the following two quotations from Carlyle, which also still remain,—

'This that they call Organisation of Labour is the universal vital problem of the world. It is the problem of the whole future for all who will in future pretend to govern men.'

'I know of no better definition of the rights of men :—Thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not be stolen from. What a society were that. Plato's Republic? More's Utopia? Mere emblems of it. Give every man what is his—the accurate price of what he has done and been—no more shall any complain, neither shall the earth suffer any more.'

No vandal hand has ever removed those emblems of the faith that was in the founders of the Society forty-two long years ago, and all through those years they have exemplified both the faith and the desires of the union and its members.

Although the majority of the early members

have passed to that bourne whence no traveller returns, or are enjoying the benefit of the Society's Superannuation after long and arduous service to the nation, the members of the present day, more determined, better organised, better educated, are carrying on in the same faith, with the same desires, asking the same questions of society:— Why should any man be a slave for the profit of his fellow? Why should he mourn with wearying ill-paid labour, that others may idle and seek pleasure? Why should he be stolen from? And ever more determined to make organised labour a problem for all who would govern for the few and not for the many. This I think is briefly what we want, summed up in few lines by our early pioneers, but I will endeavour to set it out in greater detail with some of our desires on the way to the final emancipation, and brotherhood of man.

The members of our Union, who work the trains that carry millions of pounds worth of valuable merchandise, or millions of passengers safely to their destinations through daylight and darkness, through storm and sunshine, and in the blanketing nerve-racking fogs of

John Bull's Island, are of necessity men of at least the average intelligence and education, and consequently have very definite and well-thought-out views of life as it should be, whilst their very occupation itself, driving the iron horse :—

> 'Whose sharp exhaust
> Keeps the cinders tossed,
> As it wheels the flying train,'

across country night and day, gets the very spirit of freedom and the determination to be free into their blood. That very virility and desire for fair play has on occasion been mistaken by the public for a mere rebellious spirit and a desire to cause trouble, but any who think so, even for a moment, are wrong, and I would respectfully suggest to them that it were well to endeavour to understand the aspirations of the enginemen and to help them to realise them in the interests of the whole community. I know how easy it is for the members of the public generally to feel angry at the very thought of a railway strike, because it immediately affects them both in their comfort

and their business, and therefore our members do not greatly resent the fact that they never get public opinion on their side in a strike, but it were better to get to understand men, who whilst carrying possibly the greatest responsibility of any workmen, do not get into such close touch with the travelling public, as, say, the porter who carries its luggage, the collector who snaps its ticket, or the guard who sees to its comfort. The engine driver, who has brought his train and hundreds of human lives safely into the great London terminal, through fog, snow or blinding rain, is seldom seen by the members of his human freight, for immediately he has brought his train to a stand, he is down from his footplate, and, with practised eye is looking round and underneath his engine, seeking for any defect and making sure that *she* has stood the strain in every part, and detail. His passengers, hurrying by to their various homes or businesses, or in earnest converse with friends, may catch a passing glimpse of the tired fireman leaning over the side of his cab regarding them with stolid eyes, and may even condescend to throw him the newspaper they have no further use for, but

how many give a passing thought to the human aims and aspirations of these men, much less to the nature of their labour or the danger of their calling. The hard toil of the fireman scientifically shovelling into the fire-box ton after ton of coal whilst keeping his equilibrium on a swaying, dancing footboard; the science, skill and responsibility of the driver, or the danger to both from bursting water gauges, blinding sparks, back draughts, etc., occur no more to the passing stream of humanity, than do the value of their work to the community or the wages they receive for it.

The writer, whilst a driver on one of our greatest trunk lines, worked many hundreds of passenger trains into London termini on a wage of 6/- per day of ten hours, and until our national wages settlement in August 1919, many thousands of drivers were doing similar work for the same noble rate of pay, or even less, plus an inadequate dole to meet the increased cost of living caused by the great war.

Even to-day, the top-money engine driver is not paid 2/- an hour as a standard wage,

in other words, the standard wage of an engine driver who works a train 120 miles is a copper or two, about 5d, more than the price paid by one third class passenger for his ticket for the journey, whilst the wage of the fireman is from 3/- to 6/- less.

We want, earnestly want, to improve on that. In all the everlasting controversy on the relations of capital and labour, the question too often asked is—What are the rights of labour? We feel that it is time to reverse that question and inquire—What rights has capital until full justice has been conceded to labour? The owners want to claim the right to employ who, how, and as they please; to fix the rates of wages and hours of labour, to punish and discharge men as they think fit, under the broad claim that every man has the right to do with his own as he thinks proper. Under a soulless system of capitalism such claims may appear correct in the abstract, but in a humane and christian society they are as fallacious as they are unjust.

Capital accumulated by labour, and dependent upon it for its maintenance, profit and interest, occupies a very difficult position when

it assumes, in its relation to labour, the do-as-we-please method; and relations become strained, and very acute differences arise, often ending in strife. We want, earnestly want, to improve on that. We make three definite and clear claims as to our rights as workers :—

(1) The worker has a right to a living wage —a wage which will enable him to live and support his family according to a reasonable standard of living, in good health, with a proper degree of comfort, and some measure even of luxury.

(2) The worker has a right to a basic day as short as is commeasurate with a maximum of efficiency.

(3) The worker has a right to recognition as a so-called part of industry, and, as the result of such recognition, entitled therefore to a voice in the control of industry and its operation. This embraces the right of the worker to organise and to bargain collectively with employers through representatives of his own choosing, and his right to share in the proceeds of industry over and above a mere living wage.

These rights of the worker are predicated

upon his being considered and treated as a social being. Labour can no longer be regarded as a mere commodity, to be dealt with on the basis of the law of supply and demand; to be exploited mercilessly, or to be exploited intelligently and patronisingly by the self-appointed over-lords of industry. The industry which does not or cannot yield its workers a living wage has no economic or ethical right to continue to exist in its present form, and that industry which requires of its workers unduly long hours is destructive and may also be classed as inimical to the best interests of society as a whole. Having briefly set out our ideals, beliefs and the basic objects for which we are ever striving, let me turn to and detail them.

Efficiency and Value

We are particularly desirous of making ourselves as efficient and skilful as possible, and with this end in view are anxious for greater collaboration with the officers of the railway companies, or of the State Railways, than has been the case in the past.

Engine driving and engine firing, like most skilled trades, are professions in which it is always possible to acquire some further knowledge and understanding, and our Union has for years spent many hundreds of pounds in assisting its members to acquire still further knowledge of the iron horse and its vagaries.

The average service of an engine cleaner before being promoted to a fireman is about seven years, during which period he is learning all the visible parts of the engine, the tools necessary to the work of an engine on the main line, and the general duties of disposing of an engine in the shed after its days work, the caring for it during its shed hours, and its preparation for the next trip.

After promotion to the position of fireman he begins to learn the handling and use of the full complement of locomotive tools, from the smallest pin-punch to the mighty fire-chisel-bar, the science of coal combustion—of the many classes and in combination, which also embraces the best methods of firing the various classes of fire-boxes, and the idiosyncrasies of engines, no two of which are alike, for, strange as it may seem to an outsider, two engines of

one class, built in the same shop and put to work the same trains, will display quite different qualities, one will do its work quite well in the hands of skilled drivers and firemen, whilst the other will require nursing like a sick child. He will also be learning the roads, i.e. the thousands of signals and what they indicate, the stations, junctions, curves, crossings and tunnels, the use and management of injectors, ejectors, water and steam gauges, steam heating of trains, vacuum and Westinghouse brakes, saturated steam and super-heated steam, the action of both in the steam chest and cylinder, and the various valve gears from the Stevenson to the Walchaerts, the undertaking of minor repairs and a general knowledge of all the possible failures and remedies of a locomotive, and in fact all requisite knowledge to enable him to pass his examinations to qualify for the position of engine driver.

To assist the fireman in acquiring technical knowledge, the theory is necessary in addition to the practice, and our members have spent thousands of pounds in the purchase of books and models, in the upkeep of Improvement Classes, which they attend in their own time

and without payment, and the payment of instructors at such classes. Our Union, to help its members, has purchased a large number of models of the working parts of engines, with the full mysteries of the working of the various classes of valves and pistons exposed to view, which are kept in repair at the expense of the Union, and which are sent from branch to branch, the Union paying carriage, over the lines of the very companies whose men are being instructed. The Union also pays its officers and others to act as instructors at improvement classes and runs a Journal containing a continuous series of instructive articles. Very few of the railway companies have rendered any assistance in this matter at all, and those that have, have done so in a very half-hearted manner. Only one, to the writers knowledge, has issued a booklet on the science of coal combustion, and that many years ago, and one other booklet of general advice. We want, we earnestly want, to alter that.

We desire the railway companies, or the State Railways, to assist us in this matter of helping our members to be more skilful and

efficient by fitting up proper class-rooms at all loco. depots of any size, equipped with a small library of books of technical instruction on all subjects connected with the driving, firing, failures and remedies of the modern locomotive, with full and correct models and diagrams of all the working parts of the locomotive and its accessories. We feel also, that whilst drivers will still willingly act as instructors to their younger brethren, that the companies should occasionally provide the class instructor, and pay both the special instructor, or the driver who now does the work gratis, for the time occupied. The companies, or the State, when railways are nationalised, should also pay the cleaners and firemen students for the time occupied in at least one attendance per week at the class lecture, and should grant free passes to men from small loco. depots to travel to the centre where the class-room and instruction is provided, instead of as now, the men having to pay their own fare or go without the instruction. We feel that this is by no means an unreasonable request as it is more to the advantage of the companies to have a highly skilled and efficient body of men manning

their engines, and certainly tends to the greater safety of the travelling public.

As a body of men following an important and responsible calling, we want this help to keep to high-water mark, but even if the employers do not see their duty for a time, the men and the Union will still continue, in our own interest, to make our members as properly fitted for their calling as is humanly possible. As a proof of our success in the past, and of the high standard of care and efficiency of the footplate men, I have only to point to the fact that a railway train is one of the safest places in the world, as the annual statistics of accidents to passengers prove. Mark Twain once said: 'That the most dangerous place appeared to be in bed, as the majority of deaths took place there.' Certainly there are more dangerous places than a railway train. It may be news to my readers to know that the last great railway accident in which the driver was a member of our Union was the Salisbury disaster which occurred on July 1st, 1906, and then the driver was running through Salisbury station over a road with which he was not conversant.

So we feel that 'our want,' our right, to

expect greater assistance from the employers in making our members more skilled and efficient, is not only reasonable but sound policy and economics. It would also be a recognition, though a tardy one, of our own past efforts and sacrifices to make ourselves ever more skilful, and would further stimulate enginemen, firemen and cleaners to still greater efforts of self improvement. In connection with this the Union is desirous of working jointly with the locomotive department officers of the companies, or the State, to consider and discuss methods of economy in the use of coal, oil, and all other stores, including tools, and the general preservation of the locomotive and all its parts.

The writer, on behalf of the Union, advocated this during the wage negotiations at the Board of Trade in 1919, again in laying the case for the men before the National Wages Board in May, 1920, also pressing the point as a member of the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Transport.

A committee of locomotive experts jointly composed of the theoretical (officials) and practical (men) meeting periodically for this

purpose, could decide on the best method of giving technical instruction to the cleaner, fireman and young driver, on the requisite books and models, and could also issue joint circulars or appeals to the men on general or particular economies.

I feel that if this were done it would be doubly beneficial, first in a saving to the companies or the state, and secondly, to the men, who would be justly entitled to at least a share of the value of the economics they effected, in the shape of increased wages and better general conditions of service.

Working Conditions

In August, 1919, after many years of weary waiting on miserable wages, the Union established national wage rates and service conditions on all railways, *i.e.*—it was at last recognised that the work of engine drivers, electric motormen, firemen and cleaners, was the same on all railways large or small, that their skill, responsibilities, and danger were equal in all parts of the country irrespective of the name of the railway. So that to-day all

such men receive the same wages and work under the same conditions, with the exception that on some of the great trunk systems which have important expresses running long mileage, the footplatemen on such trains receive a little more for miles run over 120 in one day. We want, nay we intend, to stick to that principle, and our earnest desire is to improve on the wage rates at present obtaining until the men who man our railway engines or electric cabs are paid in accordance with the nature of the work they perform.

To the person who would suggest that 15/- per day is adequate maximum remuneration for the railway engine driver, I would put this proposition. Let him visualise some stretch of railway that he knows, either open country where a fast passenger train may cover 50 or 60 miles in an hour, or some short stretch of suburban line in London or some other great city where the crowded morning and evening passenger trains may only run 30 miles in the hour. Then let him imagine that he suddenly was gifted with the necessary knowledge to run a locomotive, and I take him to one attached to a train of coaches containing a

thousand passengers and say to him, 'Now take this train and run it for an hour, during which time you will be responsible for the correct observance of several hundred signals, for stopping to a yard, at several stations, and for keeping time to the second. You will be in danger from a back draught of the fire, from sparks from the chimney entering your eyes, from a burst water gauge, and from missiles thrown by thoughtless boys from bridges or embankments. If you fail to observe a danger signal, either from some other duty distracting your attention, or from error of judgment as to the power of your brakes, and you run into another train and take a human life, then you will have to face both an inquest and a Government inquiry, where all the impossible rules of the company will be trotted out against you, and you may have to answer a charge of manslaughter and may even, like Driver Gourley, find yourself inside a prison cell. In any case you may lose your job which it has taken over half a lifetime to obtain, or at the least be degraded.'

Do this, and I will give you 1/10½d for the job. I think there are few who would care to

take it on. Yet that is the top standard rate of the engineman of to-day.

To make the lives of our members more tolerable we desire to bring to an end the preventable special duties, a thing we tried hard to accomplish during the negotiations between the Union and the companies in 1919, but only partially succeeded in.

We know that on railways it is impossible to absolutely abolish all special duties, as after an accident or breakdown, or in foggy weather it must sometimes happen that drivers and firemen have to be summoned unexpectedly to work some extra or special train consequent upon the dislocation, but we do protest against men having to hang about the house twenty hours or more, with a basket of food packed ready to be called at any moment for a train that every one in authority knew would be required. A little more careful arrangement of the traffic, and of relief for men who had completed the hours of their day, would largely obviate the necessity of having men waiting, never knowing when they would be required, and possibly finally sent for when they are just ready for another sleep and therefore not properly

fit for strenuous and exacting duties. We earnestly want to alter that, and also to abolish the system of so booking engine duties that at the end of his day's work the driver finds himself 100 miles or more from his own depot and consequently has to take lodgings. This to-day is a regular thing, and the men have two kinds of lodgings. Some companies provide barracks, good, bad and indifferent. The bad ones are bad, and even the good ones are poor places to sleep, for they are generally situated on property of the locomotive department, near—often right among—the clatter and whistling of moving engines in the steam-shed yard, where many hundreds of tons of coal are tipped on engines during the course of the day or night. Under such conditions, and in a strange bed, the enginemen do not get the restful and refreshing sleep so necessary for their duties the following day or night. The other kind of lodging is where barracks are not provided and the men take rest at private houses. In which case, although it may be away from the noise of the railway, there are many other disabilites. Men often arrive at a crowded lodging, with all the beds full, and have to wait until some other

men get up and then tumble two in a bed, into the still warm bed the others have left. When this waiting happens during the day men are apt to go for a walk to kill time, and thus get still more weary before taking their short rest, but when it happens during the night hours they have to wait in a fireless cottage kitchen, often in wet clothes, until either some other men are called for duty or weary nature asserts herself and they fall asleep in their chairs. Yes, the lodging away from home of enginemen is something that we want to see the end of, and which sooner or later must go in the interests of all concerned.

Control of Industry and Nationalisation.

'This Conference, representing 46,000 members, urges upon the Government the necessity of the immediate nationalisation and socialisation of land, railways and mines, with joint control by the workers concerned, and demands that any department set up which deals with railways must contain direct representatives of our organisation.'

This resolution, passed unanimously by the

delegates present at the Annual Assembly of Delegates of the Society in May, 1919, clearly indicates what the enginemen of the country desire, and is only one of several similar resolutions passed by that body during the last few years. To touch briefly first on our desire for a share in the control of our industry. We are firmly of opinion that not only can we, with our practical knowledge, greatly assist in economies and general efficiency on the lines already indicated, but that we could assist in regulating the duties of the men to the benefit of both sides and so largely remove friction and make for far smoother working of the great machine. The first few tottering steps towards giving the railway workers a share in control have already been taken, for we have, already set up, or in process of formation, committees of representatives of the footplatemen at every locomotive depot, for the purpose of conferring with the local officers of the department on matters affecting the duties of the men, and the writer, together with representatives of the other two railway trade unions, has a seat on the Railway Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Transport.

On the latter body, General Managers and representatives of the men work amicably together in endeavouring to make the railway systems of the country more efficient, of greater use to the public, and more economic and up to date in their working.

We want, earnestly want, to improve and enlarge on that until the men have a full share in the control of the railways of the nation, in the interests of the nation as a whole.

With this, or at as early a date as the people of the country are wise on the subject, we want the railways to be nationalised, to be the property of the State.

Nationalisation

In pursuance of the policy laid down by the quoted and other resolutions passed at the Annual Delegate Conference of the Society, and at the Trade Union Congress year after year, the Society, jointly with the Railway Clerks' Association, issued in February, 1921, a memorandum on 'Railway Organisation,' in reply to various statements issued by the

Railway Companies' Association and others. This memorandum, which was widely noticed in the Press, said :—

'It will be appreciated that the Unions are intimately concerned in the matter, not only on account of the proper pride which their members take in their calling and their desire that such an essential service as that of the railways on which they are engaged should be conducted with the greatest possible efficiency, but because of the probability, approaching certainty, that unless the scheme of reorganisation which is ultimately adopted adequately meets the necessities of the situation, their existing conditions of service will be prejudicially affected, and even their means of livelihood will be jeopardised. Although the importance to them of this consideration is obvious, they are equally alert to the broader public aspects of the situation, and inasmuch as they are engaged in performing administrative, clerical, technical, and operative work by which the railway services are maintained from day to day, they regard it as incumbent upon them to use their practical experience and knowledge to contribute to the solution of the

serious national problem of railway reorganisation.

'The Unions, as is well known, have always maintained that nationalisation was the logical and common-sense method of dealing with the railways in the United Kingdom. Nothing has occurred to alter their opinion. Indeed, the events of the last few years have greatly strengthened it.'

And proceeding to examine the grouping suggestion of the Ministry of Transport, applied the following criticism :—

'The scheme outlined in the White Paper is viewed by the Unions with mixed feelings. So far as it tends towards unification of management and control they agree that it will undoubtedly secure great advantages in economy and efficiency of working. But that is not enough. Who is to benefit by the economies effected? If the railways are nationalised—that is to say, if the unification is complete and the State acquires and controls the railways—these economies will benefit the traders and the community generally, either in the form of lower rates and fares, or by contribution to the revenue of the country. But if the present

scheme be analysed it will be seen that the net result is that the railway shareholders are guaranteed by the community against loss, the Minister of Transport is made to act as "whipping boy" for the companies, and, in addition, the shareholders are presented with a considerable part, if not the whole, of the economies resulting from amalgamation.'

And goes on to say: 'The Unions further feel that, whatever course is now adopted, the ultimate nationalisation of the railways is inevitable, if only because the Ministry of Transport will find complete control necessary to enforce the efficiency it will desire. They therefore suggest that as by the scheme of the White Paper the charter of the companies is to be materially enlarged, it should be expressly provided in the proposed Act that, in the event of the State acquiring the railways at a future date, the shareholders should not be entitled to take into consideration the capitalised value of the benefits now to be conferred upon them.'

Dealing with Wages and Working Conditions the memorandum continued :—

'The Unions are astonished at the suggestion

made by the Railway Companies' Association and by Sir Alexander Kaye Butterworth in his evidence before the Rates Advisory Committee, that the companies contemplate the possibility of under-standardising the rates of remuneration and conditions of service which were only recently negotiated by the railway unions and a committee of general managers acting on behalf of the Ministry. As stated by the Ministry in the White Paper (Cmd. 654) "some general rise in wages was admittedly due at the beginning of the war," and the railway unions when negotiating on the subject did so relying upon the understanding that, as the Ministry has stated, "the wage arrangements were being placed on a permanent basis." The Unions have the liveliest recollection of the difficulties which for many years prior to the war they experienced with the railway companies when endeavouring to negotiate on questions of wages and conditions of service, and any attempt to depart from the spirit of the agreements under which the Unions were recognised as acting for all their members, and under which improved and standardised conditions

of service were arranged, will be resisted by their members to the uttermost. They therefore bring to the notice now, both of the Government and the public, the expression by the companies of their desire to revert to their former methods, which repeatedly brought about a most deplorable state of affairs, and the Unions issue the warning that under no circumstances will they consent to this taking place.'

And finally expressed the opinion that: 'All the light railways and the railway-owned docks and canals should be dealt with as part of the scheme.'

Immediately following this memorandum, the two unions very carefully drafted a Bill for the complete nationalisation of railways, which was presented to Parliament as a Private Bill, but received the support of the Labour Party. At the time of writing the Bill had been read a first time, and although the present Parliament may not accept it, it is sure to come again and again until the nation is finally educated to the acceptance of its principles in the interest of all. We believe it to be a well-thought-out and acceptable measure. It proposes the purchase of railway stocks and shares

through the medium of Government stock on a basis of the pre-war market price, with a depreciation of 30 per cent.

The Bill provides that six months after the passing of the Act all the property of the railway companies and the Railway Clearing House shall be vested in the Minister of Transport, and that the canals owned by railway companies will be acquired by the State as part of the companies' undertakings. The purchase would be carried through by the issue to the railway companies' stock and shareholders direct of a specially created Government railway stock charged on the State railway undertaking and the Consolidated Fund, which shall bear such a rate of interest as would enable it at the time of issue to be realised at par. It is suggested that the purchase price should be calculated on the basis of the pre-war market price of the existing railway stocks, but be subject to a reduction relative to the amount by which securities generally have depreciated in value in consequence of the war. As a fair method of arriving at the pre-war price it is suggested that the mean price for 1913 on the London Stock Exchange should be taken

for securities quoted there, and on provincial stock exchanges for securities not quoted in London but quoted in the provinces. In respect of railway stocks and shares not quoted on the London or provincial exchanges or issued since 1913, it is proposed that the fixing of prices on analogous lines should be referred to a committee.

By a series of calculations the conclusion is reached that the pre-war value of railway stocks and loans was £1,123,228,000 and that the State under the proposals of the Bill would have to provide for the railway stockholders on the depreciation basis of 30 per cent, and with the addition of liability in respect of various loans a capital provision for a total of £789,891,100.

Provision is made for the creation of the new stock and for its redemption at par within a period of 60 years.

The Bill proposes that the general direction of the railway business devolve upon seven commissioners, whilst the Minister would be responsible to Parliament. Of the first commissioners the chairman and two others would be appointed by the Minister, one by the

Treasury, and three by the Government on nominations submitted by the recognised railway trade unions, and any vacancies would be filled in like manner as to six by the Minister and one by the Treasury.

Thus our Bill provides for the State Railways being controlled to some extent by all concerned, the Government, the users, and the workers. Notwithstanding the opposition of Railway Chairmen and General Managers to railwaymen sharing in the control of the railway undertakings, of which they have practical knowledge, which those elected on account of their titles or financial interests lack, we desire, to make it clear that the repeated declaration of the railwaymen for a share in control and management is the considered judgment of men who desire their knowledge and experience to be utilised, not for their own selfish ends, but for the public good.

The question of railway nationalisation has been flirted with by more than one Cabinet Minister, and I believe would have been much nearer being an accomplished fact to-day but for the influence of the 'interests' in our Parliament, which ever put public utility

behind private gain. On Wednesday, March 20th, 1918, Mr Lloyd George, shortly after becoming Prime Minister, received a deputation from the Trades Union Congress, which laid before him the resolutions advocating the nationalisation of railways and canals, passed at the Blackpool Congress, in September, 1917. The deputation was introduced by the Rt. Hon. C. W. Bowerman, M.P., (The Secretary of the Trades Union Congress), who subsequently stated that the Prime Minister was much impressed with the importance of the question, and had intimated that we need not wait until the end of the war to see something definite done in the matter. During his 1918 election campaign, Mr Winston Churchill, speaking at Dundee practically committed the Government to railway nationalisation, but so far nothing has been done. Nearly all thinking people to-day agree that the nationalisation of our railway systems is the right thing, but there are still a number, who, whilst agreeing in theory, fear to take the plunge, lest the railways suffer from an overdose of bureaucracy. To such I would say, can you conceive a worse state of things than those existing to-day?

Unnecessary and wasteful duplication, triplication, and even quadruplication, which prevails throughout a large part of the railway service of the United Kingdom to-day, owing to the chaos which exists as a result of scores of competing systems, each company working for its own ends, and invading the territory or encroaching on the business of other companies until the understanding observer is amused and amazed at the general muddle. The control by, or for, the Government during the war period has eased some little of it but we still see the couple of hundred or so Boards of Directors meeting regularly, eating their luncheons, and drawing their fees.

We still see the lorries of three or four different railway companies collecting or delivering goods in the same street in our towns and cities. There are still the agents and inquiry offices of several railways in the same street, or even in the same block of buildings in almost every town of any size in the country, in fact nothing but nationalisation can end the fearful waste of to-day, and work our railway systems economically. I would ask my readers to think of the many hundreds of thousands of

miles of unnecessary haulage of empty wagons which is taking place every year with the consequent wasteful consumption of thousands of tons of coal and general locomotive and other stores, to say nothing of the wear and tear of engines, track, bridges, etc., etc.

Although this was somewhat eased under national control during the war period, since August, 1921, control by Government ceased and the railways went back to private management, under which, even with the coming zone system of grouping, we shall again see the privately owned wagons running empty back to the owners' colliery sidings or works, and the wagons of one railway company returning empty over the lines of another company, when there is no traffic available to load them back to the owning company's system.

Nor is it only the waste caused by this empty mileage which is detrimental and costly, but these useless empty wagons are in the way of useful wagons, for owing to the inability of each private firm owning rolling stock, and of each railway company to use any but their own stock, the number of empty trucks lying

idle in depots and sidings is greatly increased and often at the very places where traffic is waiting for trucks. If all wagons were the property of the State railways, empty wagon mileage would be almost unknown in comparison with what is to-day, and goods and minerals of all descriptions would make quicker transit. In the past there has always been a continual complaint of shortage of trucks, which at some points during certain seasons becomes absolutely acute. Collieries are often actually prevented from turning out their maximum owing to a shortage of their trucks, and the writer has on many occasions been started off with an engine to hunt up wagons belonging to the colliery company to prevent the pit being stopped, whilst hundreds of empty railway companies wagons have been within easy reach. The railway companies own some 900,000 vehicles of their own, about 100,000 of which are passenger vehicles, the remainder being for the transport of goods, coal, and other merchandise, but are very greatly hampered as to efficient use of them by the 600,000 privately owned wagons belonging to a thousand or so colliery companies or other individual

owners. It will be readily realised how much waste power and labour is involved, and how many profitless miles are run owing to all railway vehicles not being organised as a whole.

Knowing them as I do, I cannot believe that the General Managers of our railway companies fail to see the waste involved, in fact I know that the question of the private wagon is receiving attention, but hitherto they have been more concerned in getting the greatest profits for the concern under their immediate control, than to prevent waste on other companies or on the whole railway system on a rational basis.

Yet even so there have been attempts in the past at a partial pooling of certain railway companies rolling stock, so that by combination more profitable working could be effected by groups of companies.

On 1st January, 1916, the Great Eastern, the Great Northern, and the Great Central companies adopted a scheme for a certain amount of joint working, which made some provision for the pooling of certain rolling stock in order to keep their wagons more regularly in paying service, instead of being

run back empty for so many hundreds of miles over the one system to hand back to the others. In March of the same year five other companies, L. & Y. R., L. & N. W. R., M. R., G. W. R. and N. E. R. adopted a somewhat similar, but more restricted plan. If this is good for the two groups mentioned, how much better it would be if they formed one group for the same purposes, or to carry it to its logical conclusion, how much better if the whole railway system of our small island was worked and managed as one whole for all purposes.

The War Office could tell if it would how bitterly it cursed some of our main lines to the East Coast, during the days of the fear of a German attempt at the invasion of our shores, when it was found that so many lines were incapable of carrying the rolling stock of other companies, and so many bridges unable to sustain the weight of the heavy material so necessary to a proper defence.

How many difficulties, how much delay and unnecessary expense were caused thereby will never be known by the public, but we could change it all by nationalisation.

There are a thousand other arguments which

I, or any other practical railwayman could use in support of our claim for the complete nationalisation of railways, but let me quote a few from railway managers themselves, put forward as long ago as 1909 in the form of Memoranda to the Committee of Board of Trade Railway Conference of that year, which will at least be interesting.

Here they are :—

'The amalgamations which resulted in the five existing Scottish undertakings simplified the railway arrangements of Scotland, and enabled economies to be effected in working and management, as well as the giving of services and facilities to the traders and the public which would have been quite impossible with a large number of comparatively small railways, and the arrangements which at present exist among the five companies with regard to routing of traffic and mutual availability of tickets have done something more in the same direction. There is no reason to believe that a further scheme of amalgamation which would unite in one all the railways of Scotland would not have the same beneficial results as attended

the amalgamations which have already taken place.

There would, by such an amalgamation of the five railways, be saving: (1) in the cost of direction, management, and staff generally; (2) as a result of the common use of working stock and plant; (3) by the discontinuance of duplicate services and stations; (4) in the cost of advertising and canvassing at present considered needful for competitive reasons; and (5) in the simplifying of the whole arrangements of the companies, particularly in connection with joint lines, exchanges of traffic, running powers, etc.'

The late MR W. F. JACKSON,
General Manager, North British Railway.

'There is a number of undertakings (Joint Lines, Joint Stations, etc.) owned by two or more Railway Companies, and the contending interests of the Owning Companies involves the employment of separate staffs for the management and maintenance of these undertakings.

The exigencies of competition have rendered it necessary for the companies to maintain at large cost a staff of Canvassers and other

Agencies (such as offices for the reception of goods and for booking passengers) which would otherwise have been unnecessary.'

The late MR R. MILLAR,
General Manager, Caledonian Railway.

'In the service of cartage, competition leads to expenditure which would be unnecessary if it did not exist. Vans are sent out with light loads in order to secure the earliest delivery, and in many cases, and particularly in the suburbs of larger towns, two or three vans will be engaged in delivering light loads which could easily be conveyed in one. Again, the delivery boundaries of the various companies extend into each other's districts, and thus there is a considerable overlapping and waste of resources.'

SIR CHARLES J. OWENS,
The then General Manager,
London and South-Western Railway.

'There is still another economy common to both classes of amalgamation, which deserves careful consideration, and that is the economy which would result from greater uniformity of rolling-stock and railway plant generally.

Perhaps no better illustration can be given of this than brakes. It cannot but be disadvantageous that the East Coast route from London to Scotland should be in the hands of three separate companies, two of whom use the Westinghouse brake and the other the Vacuum, involving an expenditure in 'dual fitting' which would never have been incurred had the route belonged to a single company. . . . . It is not merely that the absence of competition would in itself put an end to a great deal of unnecessary train or wagon mileage, but, by freeing the officers of the two companies from the necessity of spending their time in scheming how to secure traffic for their own line, it would enable them to throw their best efforts into what, under an ideal system, would seem to be the proper channel for the efforts of the brain-working on a railway, viz :—on the operating side, devising how best to combine economy and efficiency of working, or, in other words, how to give to the public the greatest facilities at the least cost, and, on the commercial side, trying to create and foster new industries and generally to develop to the fullest extent the resources of

the district which the company exists to serve. At present much of the time and energy of the more highly-paid officials of a railway company is taken up with work in which the trading community has no interest, and which is only rendered necessary in the interest of the shareholders whom they serve by the keen competition which exists between companies.'

MR (now SIR) A. KAYE BUTTERWORTH,
Late General Manager, North-East Railway.

'There are companies whose geographical position and circumstances are such as to determine the desirability of amalgamation in the public interest, apart altogether from financial advantage to the companies concerned.

Where such companies are competing for a large volume of business, as they generally are, by circuitous routes, and hauling traffic, it may be fifty or sixty miles farther by one route than by the other, it constitutes something little short of national waste, provided always that the shorter route is able to deal with the traffic on line and at terminal stations.

Passenger train services which could be far

better arranged to meet the public needs are duplicated, and cross-country and branch line trains connect with one main service only, and that often the worst of two routes.

Where running powers are exercised under such circumstances they are to the detriment of the general train accommodation of the district, often adding to the troubles of an already congested main line, and are duplicates which would be easily avoided under one management. In the collection and delivery of merchandise and parcels, the streets are burdened by unnecessary vehicles, due to the employment of two where one would well suffice.

The availability for traffic generally of receiving and delivery depots of such companies would secure to the public additional and often much-needed facilities for shorter and more expeditious, and, consequently, less costly cartage.

The interchangeability of tickets by such competing routes should not fail to be of great advantage to the travelling public. Then there is the financial advantage gained by the fusion of routes, providing thereby alternative

ways for the conveyance of traffic between principal centres. The congestion of one route which, in its singleness, could only be met by capital outlay, can be relieved by the alternative route being in the hands of the one controlling agent who can use the means of communication at his disposal to the best advantage, and get full economic results from the original capital outlay on the line.

The expenditure of new capital upon a congested route really amounts to waste when an alternative route—albeit in the hands of a rival company—sufficiently clear to deal with the traffic, is available. The expense of a second executive would also be saved.'

SIR SAM FAY,

General Manager, Great Central Railway.

Thus the General Managers, and any unfortunate passenger who has had to cross the country, say from the Forest of Dean to the Potteries, or from Kings Lynn to Birmingham, will be able to think of other arguments for nationalisation.

Our Union wants nationalisation, not only for the reason that greater economies of working

would enable the undertaking to pay better wages and give better general conditions of service, but because our members, as a part of the community, are convinced that it would be greatly to the advantage of the people of the nation as a whole for the railways to be the property of the State.

Social Progress

Finally we want to see, what for the want of a better term, is generally called, the emancipation from wage slavery, and the general advancement and uplifting of the people, or in other words, the more equal distribution of the wealth created; the better housing, clothing and education of the common people, the removal from the lives of men of the horrible spectres of unemployment and destitute old age, the bringing of some of the real beauties of life within the reach of all, and some little of the spirit of the 'Sermon on the Mount' infused into human affairs, both national and international, so that as soon as may be the brutal and inhuman arbitrament of war may give place to human justice and brotherhood.

As showing the recognised desire of the union of some material steps being taken towards this end, I may well quote two resolutions passed by our Annual Assembly of Delegates at Leeds, in May, 1919.

(1) 'That Congress discuss the problem of the Control of Industry, and adopt a practical and effective policy whereby the Trade Union Movement can secure for Democracy complete emancipation from Wage Slavery.'

(2) 'That in the event of the likelihood of another war, the leaders of the Labour Party, Trade Unions and the Parliamentary Committee are not to support the Government in the prosecution of the war, whether under the plea of defence or offence, but obtain information from the recognised Labour and Trade Union leaders in the supposed enemy country, and the matter then be discussed at Special Conferences.'

These resolutions were sent to the next annual Trade Union and Labour Party Congresses respectively, and although agreed to by both, are yet too far in advance of public opinion to be in practice, but I have little

doubt that the day is not so far away as some people would have us believe, when the principles underlying both will be accepted and practised by civilised mankind.

It is, in my opinion, the duty of many people as yet out of sympathy with the aspirations of organised labour, to more closely and sympathetically examine what we want and why we want it. It has been far too long the practice to treat the organised workers as merely miserable malcontents who know not what they want, or as dangerous revolutionaries who, Samson-like, are desirous of tearing down the mansion even if they themselves perish in the ruins. Neither view of the present day working class is the correct one, and the sooner those in power cease to endeavour to satisfy the demands of Labour by talking a lot of high-falutin nonsense about the delicate fabric of high finance, the intricacies of foreign policy, or the old shibboleths of a false political economy, or on the other hand to try to kill all protest from the bottom, by the endeavour to crush free speech by imprisonment and other methods at present so much in evidence. I say this because the days

either of the bludgeon or wordy bemusement, are rapidly passing, and it is no longer possible to win the old bovine spirit of labour and sleep by these methods. To-day we have a better educated working people, who are able to think for themselves, who study questions which would have been Basque to their fathers and who therefore see more easily through the political deceptions of those who in their blind fear of the workers governing themselves, would still try to deceive them as to the difficulties of giving them justice.

Therefore, only an honest attempt to understand the strivings of Labour, and its aims and desires, will be really helpful, for with such understanding will come a realisation of the fact that the general desire of Labour is by no means selfish, but is something far wider and more noble than hitherto our class has been given credit for.

I said earlier on, that the very nature of the enginemen's work instilled into them the spirit of freedom. It does more than that, for it continually brings before them in violent contrast the beauties of nature and the fearful squalor and poverty of man-made cities. The

driver and fireman during their daily journeyings about the country see, admire, and are uplifted by, such sights as the Tors of Derbyshire intersected with lovely gorge and vale, the rugged grandeur of the Snowdonian Range, the Pennines, or the rolling mountains of the Western Highlands. They run through the wonderful valleys of the Tees, Thames or Severn, and across the smiling English countryside, amongst the undulating fields bathed in sunshine, and they note the sleepy windmill, the distant sombre wood with the spire or swart gray tower of the little country church peeping above the trees or nestling under the hillside, or the tired fireman feels his weariness the less at the sight of the little brown hare scampering in freedom, until they feel almost inclined to cry with the poet 'England my England.' But they are suddenly brought back to the grimness of human life by entering the environs of some manufacturing town and seeing all beauty effaced by the murk of smoke belching from its factory chimneys, by the hurrying clatter of men in search of a mere existence whilst providing wealth for others to be able to see and enjoy the beautiful things of the

world, themselves being only slaves to a system and a factory buzzer. They see, on their way home from work through the mean streets of the city, not the freedom of the countryside, not the beauties of bounteous nature, but the hard faces of driven men, the care-lined features of the women of the working class, and the squalid pale faced children of the slums. The contrast grips them, their souls cry out to them that amidst all the wealth created we are a C3 nation, and they ask themselves, should this be?

More and more are our men and women beginning to ask themselves that question, the answer to which is not found in the diatribes of statesmen against the demands of Labour, nor in the earthquake shocks of the Press with all its mighty writers in defence of a pernicious system, nor even in the Emergency Powers Bill [the arming of the police] or the suppression of free speech, but in the still small voice of the conscience of the people. There and there only will the correct answer be found, and that conscience is slowly awakening, slowly the answer is emerging from the welter of ignorance, oppression, subterfuge, and class

domination, and so the dreams of the Socialist dreamers will yet come true.

So does our Union desire to help in any and every way to better work, greater efficiency and more usefulness. Its members are anxious to be servants of the nation and not of shareholders only. And they want, earnestly want, to see human progress more commeasurate with the wealth and education of to-day, and wagedom banished from the earth for ever, its place being taken by freedom and social progress.

I will close with the words of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, which so neatly fit my theme.

'My song is a song for Labour,
When Labour is in the right;
When it stands for wrong I will pipe
my song
For the ill-used man in the fight.

And the hope of the world is the toiler,
He has struggled and fought and won;
And the tyrant's sway is but for a day,
Let him think ere that day is done.'

J. BROMLEY.

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

By Mrs Philip Snowden

The industrial woman is not a new thing in the earth. The war greatly increased her numbers; but she was there before the war. She was, in point of fact, the first industrialist as she was the earliest agriculturalist, and made cloth and pottery long before machinery forced her into the factory. The seed she scattered at the door of her hut was sown whilst the men of her tribe were hunting game or fighting the tribal enemy for their maintenance.

The argument against the industrial woman, heard so often in the past by those who worked for the enlargement of her opportunities and the improvement of her working conditions—that the sphere of woman is the home—is true for most women ; but the conception of that sphere as of one which protected from industrial pursuits was never true. Within the memory of women still living, the prosperous housewife

devoted herself to innumerable creative enterprises, making butter and cheese and jam, spinning thread and weaving cloth, stitching clothes and brewing beer, in addition to caring for children and keeping the house clean; whilst to-day the wife of the humblest workman who keeps his house well has to be master of half a dozen skilled crafts.

The discovery of the power of steam and the invention of labour-saving machinery established the factory system in this country a century and a half ago. Work formerly done in the home was then done in the factory. Women who used to spin by the cottage door or work the weaving-frame in the cottage bedroom followed their work into the factory. The new machinery was for the most part well within their physical power to manipulate. Those men who insisted on working in the old ways could not compete with the greater productive power of the machine. After valiant struggles and some smashing of machinery they were compelled to give in and seek employment in the mills. Inside the factories they found themselves ever faced with the devastating competition of women and

children obliged to sell their labour at lower rates of pay. So the story began and so it has continued; an industrial system which produces for profit and not for use, and which does not scruple to play off women against men in attempts to lessen the cost of production by reducing the wages bill; men filled with a notion of the divine right of the male worker to what he considers to be his job, seeking by methods as arrogant and intolerant as those of the kings and barons of old to assert and preserve their own ascendency in industry; women needing employment in order to live, anxious to employ their powers in order to maintain their self-respect, or desirous of achieving their economic freedom, playing the part of deliberate or unconscious blacklegs and reducing to poverty the families whose bread-winners they displace or degrade.

During the war more than a million women in this country took up industrial occupations, most of whom had previously done no work outside the home. The ranks of domestic service were decimated. Professions and callings which up to that time had been the close preserves of men were opened to women in the

hour of the country's greatest need. Nobody in those bitter days dreamt of letting slip off his tongue the familiar sneer at the unwomanly woman who left her proper sphere to battle with the world in rude competition with men. On the contrary, special praise was devoted to those women who were willing to go the length of donning breeches and engaging in rough and coarsening labour. The public became familiar with the woman ploughman, the woman engineer, the woman postman, the woman labourer, the woman tram conductor, the woman motor-driver, the woman soldier as well as the woman shell-maker, the woman preacher and the woman bank clerk. What was true of this country was true also of every other country engaged in the war, or helping to supply the necessities of the combatants. This development has created no new problem, but it has enlarged a problem which existed before, and has seriously complicated for the workers the way out of the post-war industrial difficulties.

Like every other problem menacing to the well-being of the community, that of women's labour is anything but a simple one. It cannot

be solved by the legal or trade union exclusion of women from industry, if that were possible. Neither can it be completely settled by raising the banner of equal pay for equal work. The ultimate ideal must surely be the payment for work, irrespective of sex, of such a wage as no man or woman would be afraid or ashamed to accept, and that this remuneration should be the same for men and for women doing the same work and doing it equally well. But until that ultimate ideal is achieved there will be many circumstances and situations in which both men and women will be called upon, at the dictates of common sense, to accept the lesser of two evils; or to decide which of two goods is the greater in a specific, practical case.

About one fact there can be no hesitation. The position of women in industry is for ever established, and there can be no putting back of the clock. Those who strive for this are tilting at windmills. Having in such overwhelming numbers discovered themselves possessed of powers which they had never suspected in themselves because they had never been permitted or encouraged to test them, women are not likely to yield to any

effort, on whatever scale it may be attempted, to seriously contract their opportunities and restrict their activities. The proper pride which is born of a desire to be self-supporting instead of living idly upon the labours of others is not a characteristic which a wise State can afford to discourage. Neither is the supply of skill and ability so great amongst its men that the community can afford to dispense with the productive industrial labours of its women. Finally, the economic pressure upon women to-day is the conclusive argument for the industrial woman. Before the war the number of males was something like one million and a quarter less than that of females. The war has added to the disparity to the extent of well-nigh another million. The chances of marriage for the average woman have been lessened in the same degree. Self-maintenance has become a necessity in an enormous number of cases. Very few in number are the men who can afford to maintain in idleness a number of women. Women *must* work, and as all cannot be wives and mothers, they must labour at occupations outside the home.

Two much more pertinent and practical questions than the one of the possible exclusion of women from industry are (1) what are the conditions governing their entry into industry and (2) what bearing has the labour of women on the interests of men and the well-being of the community. To most women the general and acceptable thesis is that all occupational doors should be flung wide open to women as well as men, that the reward in each case should be the same; that no legal restrictions should be placed upon one sex that do not apply to the other; or that such restrictions should be made only with the consent of the people whose interests are affected. Such a proposition, in the estimation of the Labour Party, which is particularly concerned with industrial questions, would require to be modified in two particulars. In its opinion the will of the community and not of the particular body affected should be the deciding factor in restrictive legislation; otherwise, no vested financial interest would have suffered in the past the curtailment of its liberties. The other modification would have reference to the special function of women as child-bearers, which

calls for certain restrictions or considerations inapplicable to men.

The excellent theory that women should be permitted to enter industry on precisely the same terms as men must not blind reasonable beings to the practical difficulties in the way, although many of these practical difficulties have been grossly exaggerated. The physical life of women is not in these days so dominating a thing as it was in the past, nor as it is thought to be in the present by those of early Victorian mentality. There is a certain limitation of muscular strength in most women which debars them from entering occupations involving the carrying of enormous weights, although the war revealed incredible powers of physical endurance in women who had formerly believed themselves to be weak. Woman railway porters tossed heavy trunks about with an affectation of ease and use which was the admiration of their own sex. The alleged nervous debility of women is enormously exaggerated, as is the seriousness of their occasional physical disabilities. There are very few occupations which need exclude women on purely health grounds provided that the

hours are reasonable and the conditions of labour sanitary and healthful; and failure in these respects is as hurtful to men as to women.

As manual labour is displaced by machinery the purely physical factor in women's labour will count for less. And in any case, it is demonstrated that women are not attracted to the physical toil which they know to be beyond their powers. Such heavy manual toil tends to become naturally, and without debate, the almost exclusive occupation of men. But a fair estimate of the muscular possibilities of women can scarcely be made until women workers learn how to nourish themselves properly, substituting some substantial food for the insipid bun and cup of tea which is so frequently their midday repast; until they have received improved physical training and, in the case of married women workers, until some way has been devised of relieving them of the added strain of work in the household after the work in the factory is over.

The alleged physical disabilities of women are the simulated, or the sincere, occasion of a variety of legal restrictions upon the labour of women. Proposals to turn women out of

certain occupations, or to exclude them from certain processes have been advocated by trade unions on more than one occasion in the past on the ground of their alleged deleterious effect upon the health, the manners or the morals of women; but the real motive was almost invariably the removal of the competition of the women engaged in the work. It is not unfair to suggest that the work of the 'pit-brow lassies' was a case in point. The girls it was proposed by the miners themselves to deprive of their employment sent their representatives to London in clogs and shawls to plead their cause. The attempt of certain organisations to secure the abolition of the barmaid without due consideration of alternative employment, for reasons of health and morals, was another case of effort to secure legal interference with the free entry of women into industry. The proposal to abolish night-work for flower-girls was a third example of sex-restriction in the supposed interests of health, but in the selfish occupational interests of men.

The most important restrictions upon the work of women are those of which child-birth

is the cause and for which child-birth is a legitimate excuse. In several countries of Europe and in South Africa a woman is prohibited from working in a factory for several weeks before child-birth. In this country the restriction follows child-birth, and prohibits a return to work for four weeks. Medical authorities differ as to the effect of work upon women in the later days of pregnancy. Many doctors hold the view that work is not hurtful even if pursued up to the last moment, provided it is not too strenuous and is not done at too high pressure. For most working women it is a question of money. The birth of a child aggravates the economic situation. More money is required at a time when less is forthcoming if the mother be obliged to cease work. On the other hand the interests of the child must be safeguarded, which cannot be done without care for the mother. The only practical solution of the difficulty lies in the Labour Party's proposal of pensions for mothers. This would be much more satisfactory than the maternity benefit of 40/- provided under the Health Insurance Act, despite the Government's expressed belief in the sufficiency of the

latter. For several years the Annual Conference of the Labour Party has included this proposal in its agenda. At the Labour Party Conference in 1921, the following resolution was passed:—

'That this Conference declares that every mother of young children deprived by death of the bread-winner should be entitled to a national pension adequate in amount both for the maintenance of the children and to enable her to devote herself to their care; and that such mothers' pensions should be payable through the local post-office without inquisition or stigma of pauperism.'

This proposal would establish no new principle in legislation. The system came into being with the war and the payment of pensions to the widows and children of soldiers. The weekly allowance for the widow of a soldier is 26/8; for the first child 10/-; for the second, 7/6 and for each succeeding child 6/-. The war demonstrated the importance of the industrial front no less than that of the military front. Experience had taught the dangers of both. There is nothing base or illogical in the demand that the scheme already established

in justice and expediency for soldiers' dependents should apply to the women and children of the industrial army who have lost their natural protectors. It may be that some day the principle will be applied to all mothers because of their motherhood, thus establishing in dignity and security the most important of professions, and raising the children above the storm of industrial controversy into the calm atmosphere of economic security. Such a scheme would take out of the realm of debate altogether the much-discussed question of equal pay for equal work.

The Draft Convention of the International Labour Department of the League of Nations which met in Washington a year ago (1920) reports in favour of a compulsory exclusion from work of every woman for six weeks after the birth of a child, requiring benefits to be paid to her during her absence 'sufficient for the full and healthy maintenance of herself and her child.' It also requires the employer to allow time during working hours for mothers to nurse their children, although this latter point proved controversial and was adopted only by a majority of the Commissioners who

drew up the Convention. So far the British Government has not adopted the Convention, nor even submitted it to the House of Commons, making some trivial technical point its altogether inadequate excuse for the failure to do so. If those nations which are foremost in their advocacy of the League of Nations fail to honour its decisions in so important, and yet comparatively trivial, a point, there is not much hope for its success in graver matters.

The abolition of night-work for women also places women at a disadvantage with men in the competition for work. It is obviously done in the interests of health and of home life. Similarly with the restriction in certain dangerous trades and injurious occupations. Perhaps the most important of these are the trades in which lead is used, as for the glazing of pottery. Women are supposed to be peculiarly susceptible to lead-poisoning, and it is forbidden to them to engage in the process. It is believed amongst other evils to produce sterility in women by thoroughly poisoning the system.

There are two very definite and distinct attitudes towards the question of the restrictions upon the labour of industrial women. One

is, that all these should be withdrawn, and that women should either enter industry on the same terms as men or be content to remain outside. This point of view is taken by the extreme feminist, whose passion for a logical equality overwhelms her judgment, by large numbers of middle class women who have not had the harsh experiences of heavy industrial toil, and by certain classes of men who adopt this method of driving women out of their own industry, believing that employers of labour would not employ women if they were not cheaper. The example of the cotton industry suggests that it would not always work out in the way such men hope and expect. In branches of that industry a larger number of women than men are employed, although the rates of pay are the same for women as for men.

Working women, who have had to suffer from the exploitation of the employer since the days when, half-naked, they dragged trucks of coal along the galleries of the mines, have no desire to return to the unprotected condition of early industrial days, when unscrupulous masters employed them all the

hours there were, in conditions beyond description for their horror. They are as little inclined to advocate the return of night-work for the sake of equality with men, as men are wedded to the idea of equal pay for equal work when that means declining to the wage of the woman. Organised working women are everywhere hostile to the re-establishment of the two-shift system with its consequent return to work before breakfast or late into the night. This does not mean that organised women workers are reactionary, or that they are content with an inequality with men which leaves them still at considerable economic disadvantage with men in very many industrial occupations. It simply means that these women of practical workshop and factory experience, who know what an equality favoured by the employing class generally means for them and their children, prefer a different line of attack from that adopted by the more fortunate feminist whose lines have fallen in pleasanter places. They would have night-work for men prohibited, not night-work for women restored. They would have poisonous trades abolished for men, not

themselves alone exempted from their effects. They would have shorter hours and longer holidays for men and women alike, not the lengthening of the hours of either sex for its further exploitation.

There is considerable evidence to show that, where restrictions are applied to women in circumstances where both men and women do the same work, the tendency is for the restrictions to be applied to men, sooner or later, and generally sooner. It is a highly significant fact that almost all recent measures of protective legislation such as the Shop Hours Act, and the Trade Boards Act make no distinction of sex, evidencing the fact that public opinion, no less than organised Labour, is ripe for the enactment of protective legislation for workers as a class, including women.

In any system of society and industry where production was for use, and in which the economic motive no longer dominated—the fear of starvation or of sudden misfortune like unemployment—in which the workers themselves exercised effective control of the conditions of labour, restrictions for adult persons

would be reduced to a minimum. It may safely be said that under such a system the majority of women with children would elect to stay with their young children until such a time as they required from their mothers no attention. Dangerous trades would be abolished altogether, or would be reduced to such proportions that a few people, attracted by special conditions such as higher pay or longer holidays or shorter hours, would suffice to carry them on. Similarly with night-work, where it is impossible or inadvisable to abolish it altogether.

It is a little early yet to say how far the war has broken down for women certain social prejudices which before the war operated in some parts of the country to prevent the free entry of women into industry. Such evidence as exists points to an almost complete overthrow of certain ancient prohibitions, such as the social convention which objected to the working together of men and women in certain trades or processes, to the employment of married women in certain other trades and professions or to the employment of women at all in certain trades. Women are still not employed

as barmaids in Ireland. They are officially excluded from the pulpit in the ministry of the Church in England. The Law they have quite recently conquered. Politics they have entered since the war, though the prejudice in respect of women in politics was believed to be insuperable, and equality of enfranchisement has not yet been achieved.

There is not the slightest evidence to show that the work of married women is injurious to themselves or against the interests of the family in the overwhelming majority of cases. Married women are employed in great numbers in the cotton factories as a matter of course. But no married woman can be a factory inspector even if she be childless. The attempt on the part of certain education authorities to rid themselves of married women teachers, on no other ground than that of marriage, has aroused the keenest resentment amongst women wherever it has been made. It will scarcely be disputed that the women who has had the experience of training her own children has something of value added to her professional knowledge that unmarried women do not possess and, other things being equal, is

calculated to be of exceptional value to the children who come under her care.

Where the marriage question does rather complicate the problem of women in industry is at the beginning of their industrial experience where the expectation of it enters into the calculation of a young woman worker. Such a girl looks upon her industrial labours as temporary, a period of waiting for her true avocation. She makes no effort to become highly skilled, takes no professional interest in her work, cannot bring herself to be interested in her trade union even if she be a member of one, which would be doubtful, but lounges more or less mechanically through the working days towards the matrimonial career she anticipates in her conversations with like-minded girl friends. It must certainly be pointed out that this is the general view of the average girl's career. It is significant that technical training for women is practically confined by education authorities to needlework and domestic service, thoroughly womanly occupations.

But perhaps the most serious aspect of the question of women's labour is the attitude of

the men engaged in the same work, who frequently attempt by elimination, or by restrictions of their own, to throw off what they believe to be the menacing competition of women. In this connection a backward glance over the history of women in trade unionism will be helpful to an understanding of the present alarming growth of hostility between the sexes in industrial occupations. To save myself from the charge of plagiarism let it be admitted at once that I am indebted to Mrs Barbara Drake for the historical facts contained in the following narrative. Mrs Drake's book on *Women in Trade Unions*, which is well worth careful study, is a full and deeply interesting statement of the whole subject of organised working women.

There are traces of attempts by women to organise themselves as far back as the latter part of the eighteenth century. The hand-spinners of Leicester in 1788, the lace-makers of Loughborough in 1811, the small and struggling unions of factory operatives in the early years of the nineteenth century, the female tailors, the bonnet-makers, the women bookbinders, the women printers, either

before or after the repeal of the Combination Act in 1824 attempted to organise their labour against the grasping greed of the employer on the one hand and the fearful apprehensions of their men competitors on the other. But this organisation was casual, fleeting, fitful. A small women's union would come into being to fight some particularly atrocious reduction of already scandalously low wages, or the extraction of large fines for small irregularities, and with the winning or the losing of that battle, would fade away. With the rapid development through machinery of the textile industries the part played by women in combination increased. But not till the latter part of the nineteenth century was an appreciable start made with the trade union organisation of working women in industrial occupations as a whole.

To Mrs Emma Paterson is owing the first really successful attempt to direct public attention to the vital importance of the organisation of working women. She enjoyed the advantage of experience as a wage-earning woman herself. She was associated with Miss Emily Faithfull in her work for the establishment

of women's printing societies. She made careful investigations into the conditions of work of industrial women and published her findings in a series of articles in the *Labour News*. The principal amongst her discoveries were (1) the fearfully low wages paid to women. Women metal workers in the Black Country were receiving only 3/- or 4/- a week. The most highly skilled work of women was generally paid less than the roughest work of the unskilled labourer. (2) The women were almost wholly unorganised and the men workers almost wholly unsympathetic. (3) Women were capable of organisation and the importance of organising them it was impossible to over-estimate. In July, 1874, Mrs Paterson called together a number of able and sympathetic public men and women, and with them established an organisation for the promotion of trade unionism amongst working women. This organisation was first called the 'Women's Protective and Provident League' but became later the 'Women's Trade Union League,' out of which sprang finally the present magnificent organisation known as the 'National Federation of Women Workers' of

which Miss Mary Macarthur was, and Miss Margaret Bondfield is, the very able secretary.

As an indication of the wide-spread hostility to which these early pioneers of working women's economic emancipation were subject it must be told that the members of this first women's industrial league were 'anxious to disclaim any views of antagonism towards employers of female labour as such.' They declared its object to be less the obtaining of advances in wages than the resistance of reductions, and spoke of the strike as 'rash and mistaken action.'

Not only would Mrs Paterson and Miss Mary Macarthur, if they were alive to-day, admit the great difficulties of organising women, but everybody who has engaged in this work would do the same. In the very early days of industrial organisation not only could this be admitted of women but almost equally of men workers. Even in these days, when organised men workers are numbered by millions and organised women workers by hundreds of thousands, the utmost vigilance and the most strenuous work by paid agents and secretaries are essential to maintain the

interest of organised workpeople in the affairs of their unions. And the work of the trade unions is done by a very tiny percentage of the members.

The excessively low wages of women have been one chief reason for the difficulty of organising working women in the past. 'The low standard of living may be stated to be at once the cause and the consequence of women's lack of organisation'—said Miss Macarthur on one occasion—'This sounds paradoxical but it is nevertheless true that, while women are badly paid because of their unorganised condition; they may be unorganised mainly because they are badly paid. The low rate of wages constitutes the most serious difficulty in the way of women's trade union organisation.' Miss Macarthur made this statement in 1906. According to the Board of Trade Report on Earnings and Hours for that year the average earnings of an adult woman for a full working week were 18/8 in the cotton industry, compared with 15/5 in all textile trades including cotton, 13/6 in the clothing trades, 12/2 in the printing trades, 12/8 in the metal trades, 11/10 in the pottery and chemical trades, 11/3 in

the food and tobacco trades. Mr Sidney Webb's estimate of the average net earnings of an adult woman throughout the year drawn from Board of Trade statistics was 10/10½ per week, compared with 25/9 per week for an adult man. Women clerks frequently earned less than 10/- a week. The *Daily News* Sweated Industries Exhibition revealed the intolerable facts of home industries such as artificial flower-making, brush and cardboard box-making, and army clothing. Many of these workers, almost wholly women and children, earned as little as 3d or 4d an hour. Sometimes it was no more than 1d.

It might be suggested that these conditions have all been changed by the establishment of the Wages Boards in the first place, and by the operation of war conditions in the second. On the subject of Wages Boards it must be pointed out that the present Government apparently discourages their continued formation, whilst war conditions have ceased almost entirely to operate so far as women are concerned. It is a deplorable fact that some women are being employed at present at 2d an hour, which in terms of pre-war currency values is not quite

1d. an hour; whilst great numbers of girls can get no work at all. Of that later.

Thousands of girls and women are industrially organised to-day where only tens were enrolled in unions twenty or thirty years ago. It is reasonable to believe that the general advance in women's wages is one reason for this, enabling them to pay more easily the trade union weekly levy. Of the lesser reasons for the difficulties of organising working women several have already been mentioned. The expectation of marriage and the believed temporary character of the employment is one of the chief obstacles in the path of the organiser, though by no means an insurmountable one especially in these post-war days. In so far as such things can be estimated there are probably more girls to-day than ever before who regard the adoption of, and training for, a profession, trade or calling which shall be the means of their support, as the most serious business of their lives. The oft-expressed belief that there is some inherent sex-incapacity which makes it impossible for women to co-operate with one another for a common object is sheer nonsense. Weakness in corporate action, the difficulty of

team work, the inability to play the game in all circumstances, is a weakness which women have so far shared with democracy as a whole. The bitter struggle for the barest necessaries of existence as well as a defective educational system are the root causes of disloyalty to one another, where it exists, in both working men and working women.

The early history of the relation of working men's organisations to the woman worker is extremely interesting. Almost invariably the bottom fact of their hostility, where it existed, was the fear of losing their own employment to the cheaper instrument of production. Employers rarely scrupled to use the threat of woman labour to beat down the demands for advances in wages. Although to the women themselves these employers gave as their reason for paying them so much less than men for the same work, the inferiority of the work of women, they frequently engaged women in such numbers that the men suffered over and over again, in one trade after another which was invaded by women, their actual displacement or the reduction of their wages to a point very frequently below the lowest standard

of living. This deplorable reduction of the working-class standard of life consequent upon under-paid woman labour is a fact frequently overlooked by those bitter feminists who can see nothing in the attitude of working men but an intolerable sex-hostility.

Broadly speaking, the activity of men in relation to women in the world of industry has taken the following lines. At first they tried to rid themselves of their women competitors by seeking to exclude them. They refused to admit them to their organisations and made trade union rules, the operation of which made for the exclusion of women from the industry itself or at least from some of the processes. Some unions were quicker than others to realise the folly of this line of action and urged the women to form themselves into women's unions, even helping them financially to do this. The Lancashire cotton unions in the middle of the last century adopted an even more enlightened policy, accepting the women in their own unions and even, in some processes, coercing them into membership. It is possible that the dexterity of the women in the majority of the processes connected with these trades

might have eventuated in the cotton industry becoming almost wholly a woman's industry but for the far-seeing policy of the men members of the cotton unions. This industry is the outstanding example in refutation of the statement that, where men and women receive equal pay, the employers will invariably elect to employ men instead of women.

No set of women is more wide awake to the fact of the open or concealed hostility of large numbers of working men to their industrial employment than the working women concerned. It is not observable that the knowledge has made any great number of them bitter. It has made them more determined to combine, and to make others of their sex combine to secure that general equality of treatment in the matter of wages which alone is the safeguard of the working class standard of life in a capitalist society. But the amount of explosive material lying loose on the field of industry at the present time makes it incumbent upon every serious-minded person to see what may be done towards the establishment of smooth working relations between the sexes.

The present situation is this. Restrictions

of one sort or another are the still common rule in organised trades. Where men's unions are strong, female labour is even now actually, or to be, entirely prohibited, or restricted to certain unorganised districts, or to inferior branches of the trade. Women are resentful of this, not from any discoverable hostility to men as such, but from the feeling that the motives influencing their exclusion are not altogether respectable. They are suspicious of a characteristic male wish for domination. They believe the men to be guilty of a selfish desire to monopolise for themselves the advantages which organisation has secured for them and their trade. They disbelieve in men's expressed concern for the health and morals of women, pointing out that unemployment menaces both in women far more than in men. The old chivalry argument is as dead as the dodo since women gained experience in the industrial world. The wiser amongst women fully realise the difficulty with which these working men have to contend, anxious to save their wives and families from the suffering consequent upon the fall in wages which almost inevitably follows the invasion of their trade by large

numbers of women. It is not suggested that the problem is a simple one. How to provide adequate safeguards against the reduction of men's wages without the heavy restrictions which penalise women is the question for which various solutions have been offered.

The representative of the Engineering Employers' Federations made a suggestion to the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry that all work should be definitely divided into two classes, men's work and women's work. Men's work was to include all those trades of a particularly laborious kind unsuited to the physical constitution of women. Women's work was to comprise all those occupations of a comparatively light or specialised character for which girls and women are notoriously suited. Each kind of work should have its special rate of pay, known as men's rates of wages and women's rates of wages. Men's work should be reserved for men only. What would be called women's work should not exclude men, but should be freely open to women at the standard rate for women's work. In effect, this scheme proposed that employers should recognise the right of

men to the monopoly of the money value of their alleged physical superiority and special training, and should receive as compensation for this concession to skilled men the right to exploit the labour of women and of unskilled men. It was admitted that such a proposal would mean the displacement of many skilled men by women, but it was also suggested that these displaced men might be reabsorbed as overlookers when the expansion of trade due to the lowering of wages required these additional superintendents. An expansion which would reabsorb all the men likely to be displaced would have to be phenomenal and is not likely to take place. And any expansion which might take place in such industries would probably be, to a considerable extent, offset by the contraction in other industries for which a large amount of cheap female labour was not available.

Women of all classes are opposed to trade union restrictions on women's labour, but they differ in their method of attack. Middle class women evince a rather touching confidence in the employers of labour, and urge the trade unions to remove their restrictions, leaving it

to the discretion of the employers to employ whom they think fit. Theoretically this is right. Practically it might be detrimental to men with families to maintain, and such men cannot be altogether blamed for looking at the matter from that point of view. Working women concentrate rather upon the demand for equal pay in an almost equally touching, but perhaps more reasonable belief that the men of their own class will then voluntarily remove the restrictions their unions impose upon the labour of women. A fact significant in this connection is that in industries where substitution is not controlled women have not received the same wages as men, whilst in the cotton trade, where the pay is equal, the women cotton weavers have never been subject to trade union restrictions.

It is almost entirely a question of organisation. Women must be organised. If the men workers will not organise them, they must organise themselves. That they have the ability to do so is demonstrated by the existence of the National Federation of Women Workers. Notwithstanding the advice of certain men's unions that they should form their own unions,

the better line for women to take is to agitate unceasingly for admission to the same unions as men where their work is the same, as in the textile trades. Separate unions for women, inevitable so long as the men's prohibition is maintained, can only mean a lower rate of pay. This reacts unhappily upon the employment of men where the unions are not powerful enough to exact their own conditions from the employers. Such separatism has in it all the elements of a possible industrial sex war, injurious to the best interests of the community. But just as allowance must be made for the men's fear of a reduction in their standard of life when estimating the worthiness or otherwise of their policy of female exclusion, so the imperative needs of the working women to make a living must be taken into account when judging their conduct in the disposal of their labour. Men and women workers must meet each other half-way.

Here is a problem upon which a weak policy is worse than no policy at all. It is a matter which, in the public interest, cannot be allowed to drift. The education of women in their corporate responsibilities is the business of all

the workers, both men and women, who see to the heart of the business. Women must learn something of the immorality of accepting less than a living wage, of accepting a wage lower than that paid to a man in the same trade. They must rid themselves of the sentimental considerations present in the minds of so many women elementary school teachers, of the family obligations of men, in considering what is due to a woman. No woman should accept a wage for her work which a man in the same employment equally qualified would be unwilling to receive. Children and other dependents should be lifted by the State outside the realm of controversy and provided for out of collective funds.

The right policy for working men is to admit women workers in the same trades to their own unions, but on their own terms. That is to say, women must be required to subscribe to the same general conditions and receive the same wage as themselves, or be excluded from the union and from the trade, save in very exceptional circumstances. If it be advanced against this that the standard for men has not yet been finally and firmly

established, no matter. The women cannot wait. And the men cannot afford to let them wait. It is of the utmost importance that they carry the women with them. The great trade union movement of the country is, on the whole, in favour of the principle of equal pay for equal work. The point at issue between the men and the women workers in the same occupation, whether they be organised in the same or in separate unions, is whether the pay shall be at what is called the man's rate or the woman's rate. It is legitimate for the organised workers to demand that it shall be at the higher rate whenever equalisation takes place and the question of wages is at issue; and the organised women should lead the van in making this demand.

But when everything is said and done the chief responsibility lies with the women. So long as great masses of them are willing to accept lower rates of pay for the same work as men it will be impossible to convince employers in particular and public opinion in general that women are really worth as much as men. The world usually takes a woman at her own valuation.

During the war there was no problem of unemployment. Everybody could have work who wanted it. And the work was well paid. Enormous numbers of women engaged in industrial work who never worked outside their homes before. They shared the bountiful wages of a national peril and necessity. Since the war, all the old industrial conflicts have revived, the bitterness on one side exacerbated by broken pledges and disappointed hopes, and on the other, by the workers' obstinate resistance to the attempts which are being made to restore pre-war conditions of labour. There are in this country, as I write, more than two millions of adult men and women out of work. It is estimated that a number considerably larger than that is only partially employed. The causes of the widespread economic distress are slowly becoming apparent to the least instructed. The working people of this country are to learn more of foreign policy and its consequences upon their daily lives during the next twelve months than all the pamphlets upon the subject published by the Labour Party for their edification have hitherto been able to teach

them. The disastrous effect upon British trade and commerce of the non-recovery of Central Europe, into the immediate causes of which it is neither necessary nor pertinent to go in this connection, is being felt in the lives of millions of British workers, men and women.

The depression in trade and the cessation of war industries press with peculiar suffering upon women. At the end of the war their position was anything but enviable. They were discharged in wholesale numbers to make place for the men whose work they had temporarily taken. Over three-quarters of a million of 'substituted' women lost their jobs between the date of the armistice and the autumn of 1919, rather less than twelve months. The dismissals since then have gone steadily on. It is doubtful if more than a few hundreds of such women remain. Well satisfied with their work and possessed of a genuine desire to avoid discharging them for the sake of the women themselves, certain enlightened and humane employers have deliberately started new industries suitable for women. Genuine efforts were also made by certain trade unions to find work for the women who

had substituted for men during the war as well as for the returned soldier workers. Nevertheless, the volume of woman unemployment steadily grew until at the end of 1919, when the unemployment benefit was withdrawn by the Government, the number of unemployed women was estimated by the Federation of Women Workers at more than 100,000. Since then the problem has become even worse, and the principal officers of the Federation are almost at their wits' end to devise means for alleviating the distress of this vast mass of suffering women. Particularly difficult at this time is the woman side of the problem of unemployment, because the immensity of the man side of it is apt to overshadow it. Trade union leaders, genuinely sympathetic with the women in their troubles, are involuntarily diverted from the consideration of these by the still greater troubles in their own trades. The ruthless lowering of wages in many of those trades where women have always been primarily employed has created a problem with which the organisers of women unaided are scarcely able to cope, though they are making most gallant efforts

to do so. The only bright spot in the clouded horizon of women's industrial life in these difficult after-the-war days is the certainty that women in great numbers have learnt their own economic worth, and the value of organisation. It is to be hoped and believed that any further suffering they may be called upon to endure will enlighten them as to the value of the political franchise in the determination of their industrial and economic condition. This would lead to an agitation, which could not fail of success, for the enfranchisement of women between the ages of twenty-one and thirty.

It would be a mistake to allege of the Government that, in the conflict between the employers and the workpeople for the depression of wages on the one hand and the maintenance of a decent standard of life on the other, it has deliberately taken its stand by the side of the employing class; but it is permitted to say, on the evidence to hand, that the sympathies of the Government have the sorry appearance of being a good deal more on the side of the exploiters of women and girls than in favour of their unfortunate victims; and far more on

that side than a strict impartiality would warrant.

In 1909 an experiment was tried which had for its object the protection of the worst victims of sweated labour. The Government of the day, largely on account of the public indignation roused by the *Daily News* Sweated Industries Exhibition, which made appalling revelations of the murderous underpayment of women home workers, passed through the House of Commons what is known as the Trade Boards Act, which gave power to fix and enforce a legal minimum wage in certain notoriously sweated trades, with power also to extend its application to other trades in case of need and provided the experiment had proved successful. Four trades were selected for the immediate experiment, chain-making, paper-box-making, machine-lace-making, and wholesale and bespoke tailoring. Others, such as food-preserving and shirt-making were scheduled at a later date for the application of the Act. It was estimated that, through the Trade Boards Act, in three years, the wages of the women workers were raised from 5/- to 11/3½ in chain-making, from 7/-

or 8/- to 11/11 in lace-making, from 8/5 to 13/- in paper-box-making and from 8/- to 14/1 in wholesale and bespoke tailoring.

Public opinion thoroughly endorsed this Minimum Wage enactment, the principle of which worked so well and beneficially that it was gradually extended until it applied to a very considerable number of sweated trades. During the war all kinds of safeguards and restrictions were temporarily removed, or were administered with such laxity that they might well have been non-existent. After the armistice a long list of sweated trades was submitted to the Minister of Labour, who promised as far back as 1919 that Trade Boards should be set up to deal with them as quickly as possible. In some cases this has been done. Notice has been given to some others of the scheduled trades of the intention to apply the Act. In a great number of cases, however, nothing whatever has been done, and the conviction grows amongst serious friends of the working women that it has become part of the Government's deliberate policy to discourage the further setting-up of these Boards.

This year (1921) the large body of investigators into sweated industry received notice of dismissal. Vigorous protests against this were made in the House of Commons, with the result that the services of twenty-eight of these investigators are to be retained. In reply to a number of questions upon the subject Dr Macnamara spoke of 'the growing volume of representations' against the establishment of Trade Boards 'on the ground that unemployment, bad enough as it is, would thereby be made worse.' The bottom fact of these representations is, that comparatively well-paid British trades find it difficult to compete with workers in similar trades abroad, where the follies of the various peace treaties have inflated the currencies and depressed the standards of working-class life almost to vanishing point. It is impossible that Labour or the friends of Labour should consent to the approximation of the British standard of working-class life to that of the unfortunate countries of Central Europe; or that, for the sake of making profits for British capitalists, the friends and protectors of women and children in this country should permit the general

restoration, or the continuation, of rates of pay and conditions of work which would be an outrage upon the conscience and sense of decency of every citizen worthy of the name.

Meantime the most serious reductions in women's wages are taking place all over the country. Engineering employers in the Midlands have already reduced the minimum rate for their women employees from 43/6 to 35/9. Women engaged in a department of the fur trade are getting from 15/- to 18/- a week. In the sack trade the weekly wage is from 11/- to 18/-; whilst in large towns all over the country waitresses in cafés and restaurants are receiving 10/- and even less for a week's labour. In estimating the real value of the wages quoted above, regard must be had to the decline in the purchasing power of money, which reduces the *real* remuneration of these unhappy women by one-half of what is stated.

A good deal of public sympathy with the unemployed woman is lost to her because of the almost universal belief that in thousands of cases she is so by her own wilfulness. It is well known that all over the country middle

class women are crying out for cooks and housemaids, who are not to be had. This inconvenience affects such people in one or two ways. Either they believe that all the talk of women's unemployment is a myth, or they blame the women for not taking up domestic work, and refuse to be interested in their case.

It is certainly true that, in spite of the pressure brought to bear upon workless industrial women, very few have so far been induced to accept work of a domestic character. And this, although the wages of household workers remain very high, considerably above the pre-war level. In addition, all kinds of bribes, such as 'liberal outings' and good food, are specially mentioned in advertisements for servants. It is widely believed that the dearth of this class of worker is so great that practically the whole of the unemployed women of the country might be absorbed into it, but for the lamentable reluctance of women and girls to adapt themselves to the conditions of domestic life.

The reasons for the alleged diffidence of women in taking up work in the house have been traversed over and over again, and must

be familiar to all. In households where only one maid has been kept, it is only too true that she has been, in the past, all too frequently a sweated worker. Add to the hard and endless toil of the maid-of-all-work the loneliness of the kitchen and the loftiness of the drawing-room in the average suburban villa, or the harsh scolding of the shabby boarding-house, and it is small wonder that the intelligent girl, with a new consciousness of her economic worth, should prefer to work in a factory or a shop. On the other hand, there is no occupation which a bright girl in co-operation with an intelligent mistress might make more interesting, healthful and attractive than the keeping of the home.

It is extremely doubtful, however, if in the new circumstances of the world since the great war, domestic service would absorb more than a fraction of the unemployed women of the present time, even if they were entirely willing to accept it. During the war many middle class women of moderate means, who had handed over to their hired help most of the duties of the household up to that time, found themselves thrown suddenly upon their

own resources by the rush of servant girls to munitions making. They learnt to do much, if not all, of their housework for themselves. Some of them learnt to like doing it. To a very considerable extent this class of woman has become independent of outside help. Labour-saving devices which they have had the means to buy have added to their independence, made them in some cases thoroughly indisposed to go back to the old, helpless, snobbish ways. Other women, neither so strong nor so competent, have taken themselves and their families into hotels and boarding-houses, weary of the recurring friction between themselves and an endless succession of maids, sometimes as difficult and inconsiderate in the day of their power, it must be admitted, as the worst mistresses of pre-war days.

Again, the effective demand in the country is for *skilled* domestic service, and that very few of the displaced factory and workshop women are able to give. The degree of competence which thousands of mistresses have achieved in the arts and crafts of the home has made them very impatient of the slovenly, unskilful work of the average untrained servant.

For those who come raw to the work from entirely different occupations they have neither the time nor the use. And those reformers who have grumbled at the conditions and wages of domestic service in the past will scarcely blame the housewife who insists that, in return for the good wages and conditions she is willing to supply, she must have qualified workers and competent work.

A development on right lines is the Government's training schemes for women, particularly those devoted to the training of efficient domestic servants. Some thousands of women have already availed themselves of this training. Thousands more are ready to do so if the schemes can be extended. This again depends upon the amount of money available for the purpose. A general reorganisation of the domestic life of women, both mistresses and maids, might very usefully be made the special concern of those who are anxious to secure good and healthy employment for women. Brigades of women municipal workers, cooks, housemaids and nursery-maids, might be organised to work in houses for so many hours a day at a fixed rate per hour.

This would leave them their much-coveted freedom in the evenings, except where they were engaged specifically for evening work, and would save the household from the intrusion into their midst as a permanency of a discontented and therefore disconcerting person.

Such an organisation would free for a larger social service numberless married women of special gifts and education, childless, or whose children no longer require their undivided attention. It grows less tolerable with the years that any miserable social convention should deprive the community of the professional or artistic skill of a class of women considerably larger than is generally supposed.

To sum briefly the problem of women in industrial and professional callings. The overwhelming majority of women will be compelled in the future to earn their own living by work either inside or outside the home, as has always been the case. No efforts of the opponents of women's work, whether trade union competitors, employers of labour or old-fashioned people, can alter the fact of the economic necessity of women to work in large and increasing numbers at occupations *outside*

their homes. There can be no shadow of excuse for attempting either to eliminate or restrict the occupational opportunities of women except on the ground that their free and unfettered entry into industry frequently results in the displacement of men, or the reduction of their standard of life. In such case it certainly means hardship for the wives and children of the supplanted men, which is a not inconsiderable factor in the social economy to those who take large and wise views of social problems.

The proper remedy for this state of affairs is, however, neither exclusion nor restriction. These, at the best, can only be regarded as temporary devices in a capitalist system of society to save the largest number of people possible from the dire effects of competition in industry, which is the foundation upon which the capitalist structure rests. It is the gradual and as rapid as possible establishment of the principle of equal pay for equal work, which will help towards the right solution; by which is meant, so far as this article is concerned, the payment to women of the same wage as to men for work executed under the

same conditions. To enable this to be done universally, provision for the maintenance of all children should be made by the State as in the case of the children of soldiers.

Women professional and industrial workers must be encouraged and helped to organise, preferably in the same unions as men where men also work at the trade. Education in corporate responsibility is of the highest importance to women who would enter callings until recently regarded as the exclusive province of men.

As year by year idleness becomes less and less respectable and more and more intolerable, occupation will have to be found for increasing numbers of women ready and anxious to avoid the shame of lazy dependence. This can only be done satisfactorily and with completeness when the social system of the present has given place to a new order, in which all the instruments of labour are in the hands of the community as a whole. At present the appearance in the industrial world of women and girls whose parents can afford to maintain them at home (a gradually decreasing number) is apt to be resented by other women, whose

chances of a livelihood are lessened by the competition of these girls. The line of activity for the present—providing temporary alleviation—is to increase the chances of marriage by the improvement of the conditions of the labour of men; to attract more women to domestic service by making manual toil in the home honourable and dignified because honoured and respected; to shorten the general hours of labour both for men and women, thus providing for larger numbers of workers in every trade. A universal eight-hours' day, or even seven or six, is not a poet's dream, but an immediate practical necessity. The elimination of child labour for wages altogether would enlarge the number of industrial openings for adult persons, and would advantage the community through the improved health and education of its child life.

Technical education ought to be provided by education authorities for women and girls as abundantly as for men and boys, and in the same subjects, if desired by the girls. At present such education for girls, very scantily provided, is limited to domestic pursuits.

It is important for the parents of girls to bear

in mind the absolute necessity in these days of equipping their daughters with a serviceable education and with a profession, trade or business, which shall enable them to earn their own living. For the daughters themselves it is equally important to realise their obligation to enter their calling with seriousness, to do their chosen work as well as it can be done, and to resolutely decline to accept such payment for it as would, by causing them to be displaced or by lowering their wage, rob honest men workers of the price of their toil and take the bread out of the mouths of their wives and children.

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